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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

THE MODRONS MARCH AGAIN!

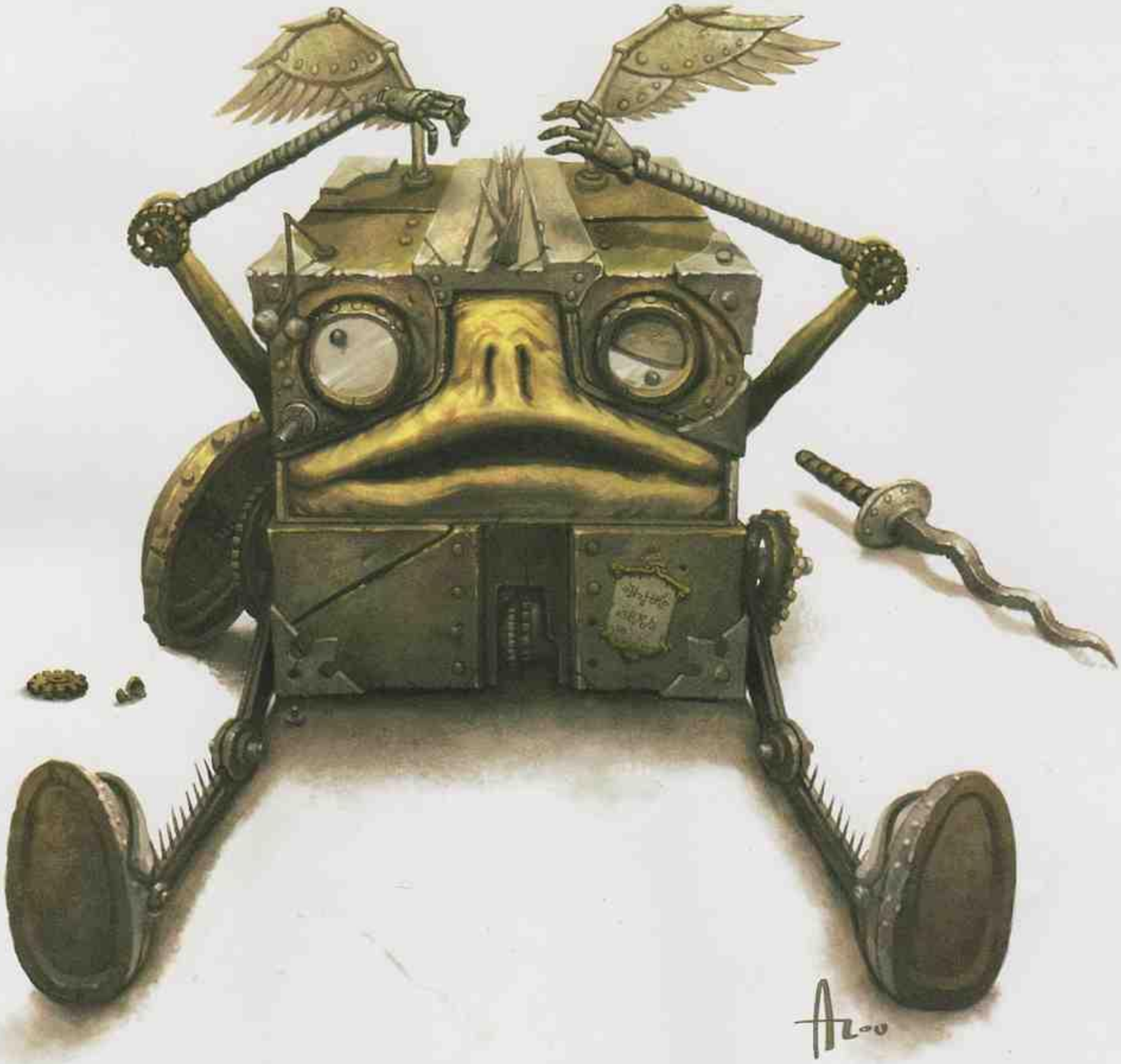
HEIRONEOUS · ANCIENT PCS · FORGOTTEN REALMS · EBERRON

dragon

ISSUE 354 · APRIL 2007

30 YEARS OF DRAGON

"What, us worry?"



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U.S. $7.99 | CAN $9.99

ISSUE 354 APRIL 2007

Dragon

VOL. XXXI NUMBER 11

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Editor-in-Chief: Erik Mona
Senior Art Director: Sean Glenn
Art Director: Sarah Robinson
Managing Editor: Jason Bulmahn
Associate Editors: Mike McArtor and F. Wesley Schneider
Advertising & Marketing Director: Joshua J. Frost
Director of Operations: Jeff Alvarez
Prepress Manager: Kelly O'Brien
Circulation Director: Pierce Watters
For Wizards of the Coast: Rich Redman and Ed Stark

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Peter Bergting, Rich Burlew, Julie Dillon, John Gravato, Andrew Hou, John Kovalic, Tony Moseley, Aaron Williams,, Ben Wootten, James Zhang

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS
Keith Baker, Shelly Baur, Eric L. Boyd, William L. Christensen, Andy Collins, Mike L. Fiegel, Josh Frost, Ed Greenwood, Eric Jansing, Tito Leati, Nicholas Logue, Hal Maclean, Ken Marable, Sean K Reynolds, David Schwartz, Amber E. Scott, Greg Vaughan, Jasin Zujovi

PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC
2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200

Chief Executive Officer: Lisa Stevens
Director of Operations: Jeff Alvarez
Technical Director: Vic Wertz
Corporate Accountant: Dave Erickson

Dragon® (USPS 318-790) is published monthly by Paizo Publishing, LLC, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201 Bellevue, WA 98005-4200, United States of America. (ISSN# 1062-2101) Periodicals Postage Paid at Bellevue, WA, and at additional mailing offices.

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BACK ISSUES: paizo.com/dragon or call (425) 289-0060.

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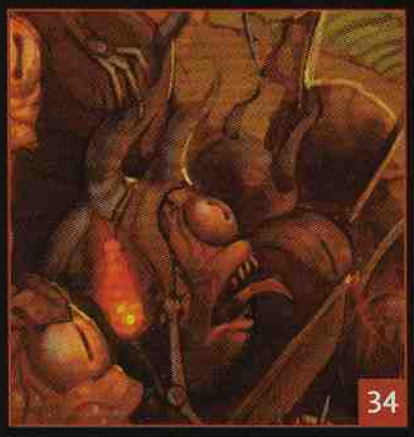
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Letters to the Editor: scalemail@paizo.com
Submissions: dragon@paizo.com
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Back Issues: paizo.com/dragon
Customer Service: customer.service@paizo.com
Sage Advice: sageadvice@paizo.com
Advertising: josh.frost@paizo.com

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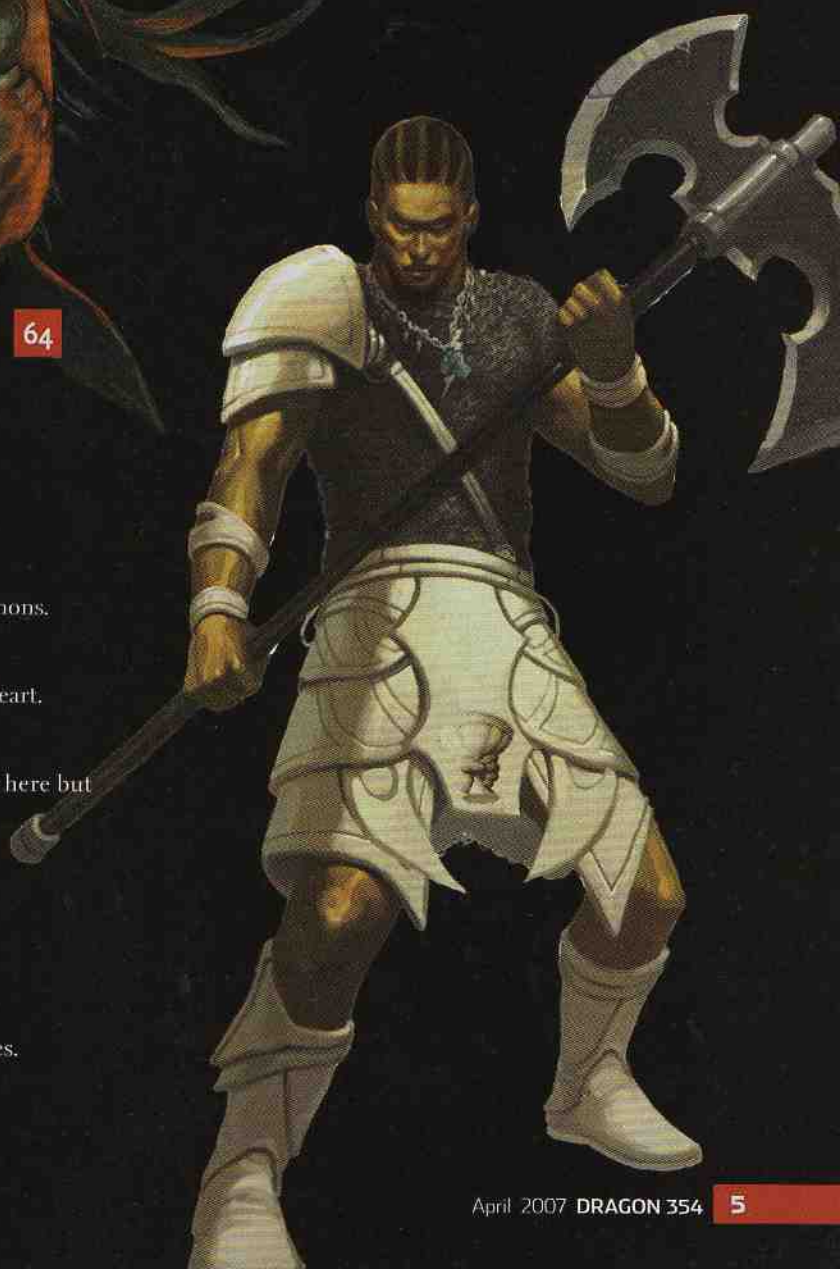
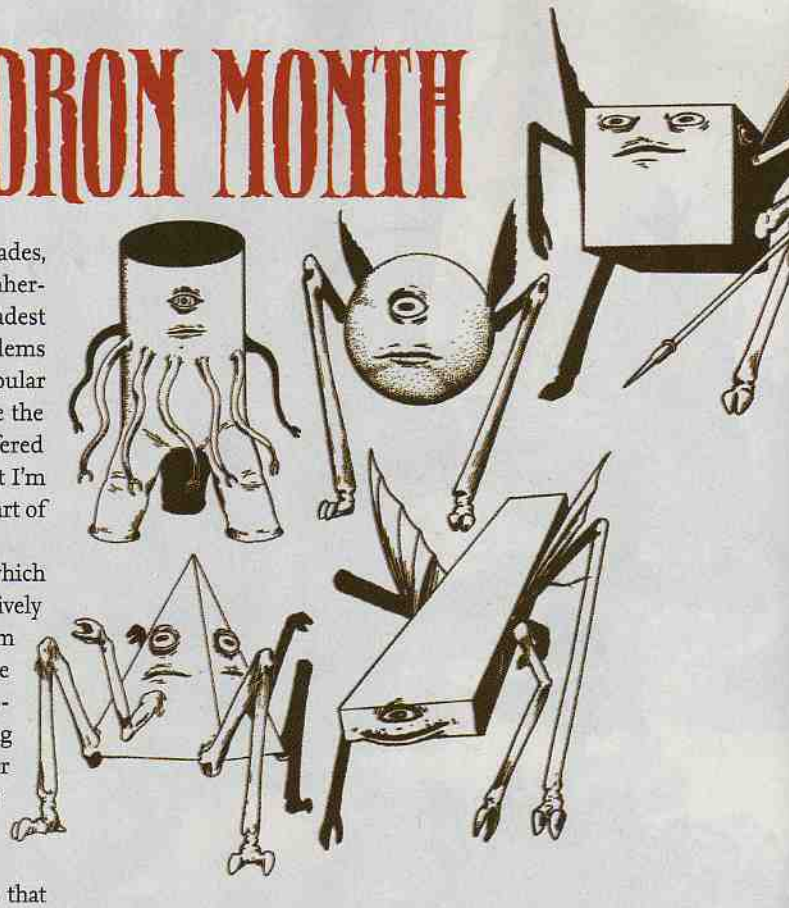


THE GREAT MODRON MONTH



Every year we face something of a dilemma. For decades, *Dragon*'s April issue has focused on the humor inherent to the D&D game, often doing so in the broadest sense imaginable by statting up pizza and Dorito golems or including D&D-themed lyrics set to the tune of popular songs. I've never been a huge fan of the tradition, since the jokey material often wasn't actually funny, and usually offered little of real use to a campaign. But that's not to say that I'm completely without a sense of humor. In fact, the best part of Dungeons & Dragons, for my money, is the laughing.

I'm an extremely busy person as well as a Mac person, which means I haven't played a lot of these newfangled massively multiplayer online games. Given the addiction to them displayed by members of Paizo's editorial team, I have no doubt they are beautiful, compelling games that capture some of the best elements of the fantasy roleplaying that has made D&D one of the most successful consumer brands and cultural phenomena of the last century. What I have a hard time believing is that these new games, usually played alone in a darkened basement, promise the same kind of unpredictable, face-to-face interaction that forms the true appeal of tabletop roleplaying.

Anyone who has read or played through *Dungeon*'s recent Age of Worms Adventure Path, or for that matter anyone who has read any of my freelance RPG design credits, probably knows that I take D&D very seriously and that I greatly enjoy the rich history of the game and its various campaign settings. My fantasy reading tastes tend to skew toward the morally ambiguous sword and sorcery tales of the 30s, 60s, and 70s that informed Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson when they created the original Dungeons & Dragons game. I like my horror Lovecrafty and my fantasy infused with more than a dash of Robert E. Howard. But none of these things explain the true allure of the best D&D campaigns. For that, you've got to understand the humor.

Sometimes, it's a random Monty Python quote regurgitated at exactly the right moment. Sometimes it's an unexpected maneuver in combat or a terrible roll when the party needs it least. A lot of the time it has nothing to do with the game at all—a choice insult from one player to another, a spilled bit of food or drink, or a new nickname. Whatever the cause, D&D is an excuse to get together with friends, and when friends get together, laughter usually follows. As much as I love the continuity of the game, learning a new trick with my player character, or weaving compelling mysteries as a Dungeon Master, the true joy of D&D comes when friends laugh together.

Accordingly, *Dragon*'s April issue is a good reminder to us all not to take ourselves too seriously, and I can think of no better symbol of not taking ourselves too seriously than the boxy little critter on this month's cover. After hinting about them in subtext and minor articles for the better part of a year, we're finally ready to bring the modrons back into the spotlight, and there's no better month to do it than April.

The modrons suffered greatly in the transition from second to third edition. Once a paragon race of law, they vanished utterly around 2000 or so, presumably because the third edition design team thought they were dumb. You can understand the reasoning. The original modron art, from first edition's *Monster Manual II*, made them look like dice with legs, geomorphic losers representing the most alien—and hardest to swallow—creatures in the Great Wheel cosmology. By the time the third edition *Manual of the Planes* came out, they warranted two measly paragraphs and were replaced, more or less, by a bunch of bugs. But thanks to April, the modrons are back in all their weird, alien glory, and they have a message directly from the mouth of their mysterious leader, Primus:

Don't take yourselves too seriously. We certainly don't.

ERIK

Erik Mona
Editor-in-Chief
erikm@paizo.com

SCALE MAIL

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to **scalemail@paizo.com**. Please include your name, city, and state.

#352 COMPLAINT

I just received #352 and let me say you guys really outdid yourselves. I had been telling fellow gamers how worthless DRAGON has gotten and issue #352 is a prime example. I don't expect that you would actually read this letter as you are obviously phobic of "snail mail." In the rare chance that you do, I doubt that anything I write will have any lasting effect. It just goes in one ear and out the other with you guys. Issue #352 is a prime example. Did you actually read Michael Mallon's letter? In the same issue that you print his letter complaining about wasted space, you devote almost the entire issue to Bas-Lag.

Now I'm happy that Erik Mona likes China Miéville's books. Why am I paying for that? Hey Erik! I want my money back for issue #352! Myself, I run a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign and I do enjoy the Realms material, but I would rather have material that could be used in any campaign rather than have useless material about Eberron's dragonmarked or some other campaign-specific material. Heck, I'd rather have a story from Ed Greenwood, or RA Salvatore.

Quit devoting the entire issue to one subject. Like #352, #351 devoted the whole issue to some stupid inn. I want my money back for that issue, too! At least put some different subjects in each issue, then when there's a stinker of an article one of the other columns may be of some use.

It would also be nice if Sage Advice answered actual problems. "The *Monster Manual* says all outsiders have proficiency with martial weapons. Do aasimars?" Of course they do, dillhole! They are outsiders! Answer questions that are not answered if you actually read the books or confirm hazy subjects like "If I take the Arcane Disciple feat in the *Complete Divine* for my human favored soul of Boccob am I considered as having access to the Magic domain for the dungeonkeeper prestige class? If I take the Magical Training feat in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn* am I considered an arcane spellcaster if I wanted to take the dragon disciple prestige class?"

Get the magazine back on track, guys. For us unfortunate people without computer access it is our link to the D&D world. When it ceases being relevant there is no reason to subscribe. Those of us who cannot play "Warcraft" or other awesome games have only D&D for that RPG outlet.

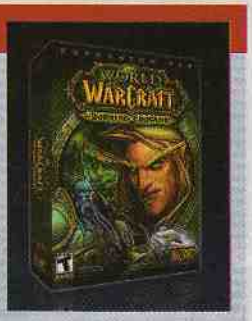
If you made it this far...

C. Searing
Via "Snail Mail"

Issue #352 was bound to stir up some controversy. I knew going in that China Miéville's brand of fantasy wouldn't appeal equally to all readers, which is one reason why we jammed so many monsters and new races into the Bas-Lag gazetteer. Is your FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign too orthodox to include a slake moth or handlinger? Really? And while it is no doubt true that Erik Mona likes China Miéville, my opinion on the matter is far from unique, as Miéville's books routinely hit best-seller lists, he has been the recipient of the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke award twice, and has been nominated for the Hugo, Nebula, Bram Stoker, and World Fantasy awards. DRAGON has, in the past, devoted significant pages to other popular authors like Terry Brooks and George R. R. Martin, and will continue to do so in the future.

Issue #351's World Serpent Inn was merely a framing device for a tour of D&D's various campaign settings, which are often jarringly different from one another. Sorry it didn't work for you, but as #351 appears to be the best-selling issue of the magazine in more than a year,

ONYXIA'S LAIR CONTEST WRAP-UP



All of us here at DRAGON would like to congratulate Janich Yaceczko, of Monroe Falls, Ohio, on winning last December's Onyxia's Lair Contest! Janich pillaged a collector's edition copy of Blizzard's new *The Burning Crusade* expansion for the *World of Warcraft* online RPG and a prize pack of Upper Deck Entertainment's incredibly popular *World of Warcraft* trading card game. Thanks to everyone who entered, and just look on the next page for our newest contest.

SETTING ALIGHT THE GRAIL-SHAPED BEACON

DRAGON TALK

Paizo Publishing, in association with *Spamalot: the Musical*, brings you a giveaway of Pythonesque proportions. Five grails have been concealed in both April cover issues of DRAGON and DUNGEON. All of the grails look the same, although they might be hidden in drastically different locations. To make things a little harder, we've even hidden two of the grails on **paizo.com**. Find all twelve and email their locations to **contest@paizo.com** with the subject line "Grail Giveaway" and we'll award Fifty (50) of the correct entrants Spamalot-related prize packs. (See **paizo.com/spamalotgiveaway** for additional details.) Don't let a set of Monty Python coconuts escape your grasp—enter today! All entries must be received by April 30, 2007. Void where prohibited.

I'd say it was to the taste of at least a few of our readers.

As for Sage Advice, our wizened old Sage answers the questions he receives, no matter how dumb or obvious they might be to some readers. I managed to track him down and pose your questions to him, and a few days later a cute little mouse arrived bearing a scroll with scratchy writing. According to the Sage, the answers to your questions are: No, and yes (provided you choose to cast the spells as a sorcerer). Not bad turn-around time for a "snail mail" question, eh?

A DIFFERENT VIEW

I received my copy of DRAGON #352 a couple of days ago and read it voraciously. The Bas-Lag gazetteer was awesome. I have not yet read *Perdido Street Station*, but I have to say that the generic feel of it mixed in with a tiny bit of flavor from EBERRON matches the theme of my homebrew almost perfectly. I look forward to getting my hands on the novel.

The Class Acts were great as well. I really liked the info provided for divine characters. I am a huge fan of the Aztec pantheon myself, with Quetzalcoatl being my favorite deity of the pantheon, so naturally my eyes lit up when I saw this stuff. Absolutely brilliant! I'd also love to see deities from the Egyptian pantheon touched on.

Thanks for a wonderful issue.

Charles Wenzler Jr.
Via Email

While we don't currently have plans to feature Egyptian gods in Class Acts, I've definitely forwarded the idea to the right people, and you never know what might happen in the future.

A YET SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VIEW

I have been a long-time reader of DRAGON and have played for most of my life. I have just recently renewed my subscription to DRAGON and have loved every issue. When I started to read issue #352 I could not believe someone was complaining about the content in the magazine. Do not listen to them. I almost always campaign in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, but I really enjoy articles about any campaign. They are always good for new ideas for my work. Also, the article about bows and crossbows was great. They were a great addition to the game. Keep up the good work and thanks for keeping D&D and the FORGOTTEN REALMS alive.

George "Euric" Anderson
Smyrna, TN

We hope you (and C. Searing, for that matter) have been enjoying the regular "Volo's Guide" FORGOTTEN REALMS feature that is now a monthly part of each issue of DRAGON. We've got an exciting array of Realms articles in store in the coming months, and we look forward to hearing from readers about them. —Erik Mona

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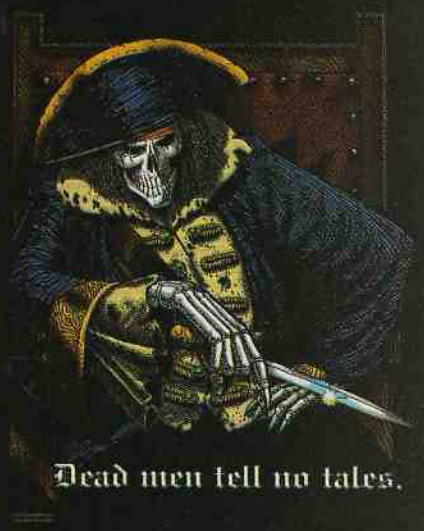

I'M NOT ANTI-RELIGION,
I'M JUST ANTI-HYPOCRISY.

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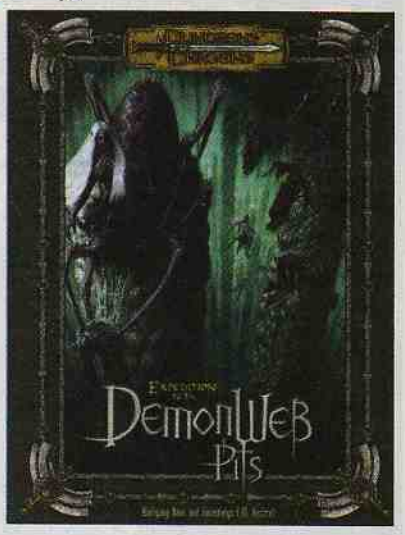
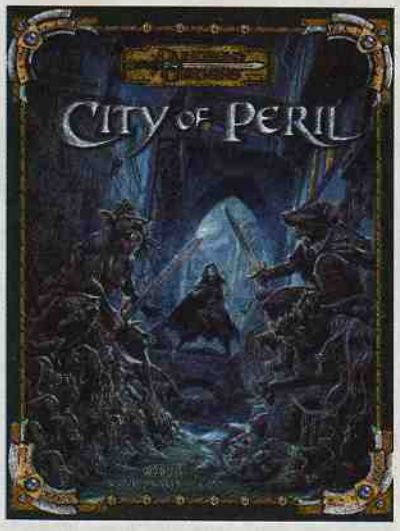
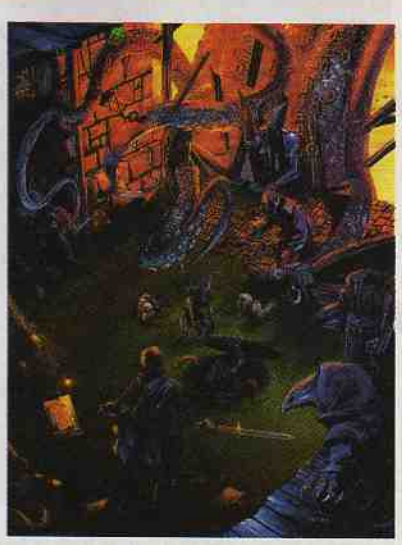
NEW RELEASES



Lolth, the Demon Queen of Spiders, returns this month in *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits*. Entangling designers Wolfgang Baur and Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel to spin a new tale, the Spider Queen's machinations trigger a quest that leads characters from their home world to Sigil, the City of Doors, and ultimately to the Abyss. Says Baur: "To be able to take Gary Gygax's vision and put it through the PLANESCAPE blender—how could I say no to that?" Among the endless hordes of drow, demons, and pure mayhem are ten new monsters, masses of treasure, and a ticket for characters of levels 9 to 12 to roam the planes.



City of Peril takes you downtown, but watch your back. Like other entries in the Fantastic Locations line, this dual D&D and *D&D Miniatures* accessory includes two reusable double-sided maps created by master cartographer Jason Engle. Perfect for urban encounters, they depict a market square, sewers, a two-story inn primed for a balcony fight scene, and a back alley with wooden planks perfect for scoundrels to make into rooftop bridges. To expand the adventure possibilities, Ed Stark designed an accompanying 16-page booklet with encounters and monsters keyed to specific D&D minis.



Throughout DRAGON's more than 30 year history, no series of articles has run longer or to greater acclaim than its monster ecologies. This month, *DRAGON Presents: Monster Ecologies* takes a look back at this prestigious series, compiling some of the most popular ecologies from the past several years, along with anecdotes from the best-known authors and personalities in gaming, pages of new content, art, historical details, and an index of every ecology the magazine has ever printed. You can find this special issue at your local game store or online at **paizo.com.**

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON #355

CREATURE CATALOG VI
by Kevin Baase, C. Wesley Clough, et al.
You can never have too many monsters! The sixth entry into our long-running series of bestiaries presents eleven new threats and old favorites, including the cannon golem, the obilviax, the rot giant, the scarecrow, and more!

SEVEN SAINTLY DOMAINS
by Hal Maclean
Standing in opposition to the seven deadly sins, these goodly domains allow your cleric to extoll the virtues of charity, chastity, generosity, humility, patience, temperance, and zeal.

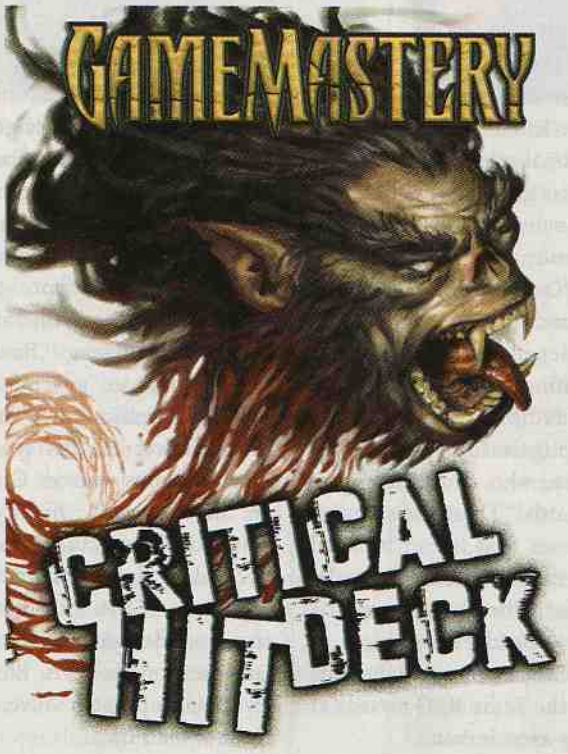
MUSIC IN D&D
by Jose Montero
Take advantage of your iPod, iTunes, and some of our own playlists to jazz up your next game.

PLUS!
The Ecology of the Devourer, Volo's Guide, Dragonmarks, Class Acts, Scale Mail, Sage Advice, Savage Tidings, and comics, including *The Order of the Stick*, and more!

reported by Shelly Baur, William L. Christensen, Mike L. Fiegel, and Josh Frost

CRITICAL HIT DECK

Among the most popular house rules enacted by gaming groups, critical hit tables provide a cinematic and descriptive alternative to simply multiplying damage. Boiling down that idea into a 52-card deck—which provides a visceral and tactile thrill to the player who draws from it—this month Paizo Publishing releases the Critical Hit Deck. Each card contains four different critical hit effects reflecting four kinds of damage—bludgeoning, piercing, slashing, and magical. While most at least equal that magical ×2 damage multiplier a few likely lead to instant death!



FRESH FROM THE FORGE

Dwarven Forge releases two new miniature terrain sets this month: the third set in the Den of Evil room line, and the second set in the Medieval Building line. The Den of Evil set includes two cauldrons (with removable flames), two doors, a forbidden tome, and various wall and floor tiles complete with extraplanar-looking designs. The Medieval Building Expansion Set includes, among other things, a fireplace, two beds, a staircase, stone pillars (to allow for building multiple levels), and wall and floor tiles. Both sets are available at **dwarvenforge.com** and can either stand alone or be combined for more complex layouts.

THINGS THAT SHOULD NOT BE

Cthulhu, Dagon, and the Ghoul from "Pickman's Model" now walk the earth, thanks to SOTA Toys' release of three figures based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft.

"I wanted this line to be about taking the classic stories of Lovecraft and combining them with an original take by our artists," said SOTA Toys president Jerry Macaluso. "I want these to be beautiful and terrifying all at once."

Long-awaited by fans, many of the figures sold out before they arrived in stores, but Cthulhu himself still awaits you online at **sotatoys.com**.

NOT IN KANSAS

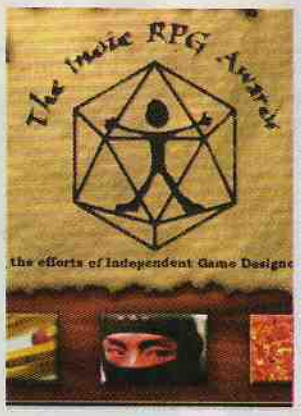
The Zorcerer of Zo, from Atomic Sock Monkey Press (**atomicsockmonkey.com**), is a fairytale RPG that takes place in a world inspired by Oz, Neverland, and Narnia.

"ZoZ lets you be the clever third son that develops into Prince Charming, slays the dragon, and saves the princess," said Chad Underkoffler, the game's creator. "If you liked *Shrek* or *The Princess Bride*, ZoZ has something for you."

A unique feature of the book is an extensive section detailing the first ZoZ campaign, offering insights into the game's creation, Gamemaster tips, and player commentary.

1D6 DELICIOUS DICE

Having to eat those low rolls doesn't taste so bad with edible dice. While obviously for the casino crowd, the chocolate and gummy d6s from **vegasimage.com** are likely to appeal just as much to gamers with a sweet tooth. **Dicegamers.com** also has a variety of gamer snacks, most notably dice lollipops and six-siders made out of cheese. These dice are great gifts (or gags) for gamers, and of course everyone knows that dice that don't perform up to snuff get eaten, guaranteeing the survival of the highest rollers. Now if only some multi-classed gamer-chocolatier would work up a set of tasty 20-siders!



INDIE IN INDY

Game and voter registration ends this month for the Indie RPG awards, an annual celebration of small press game design that culminates with an award ceremony at Gen Con Indy.

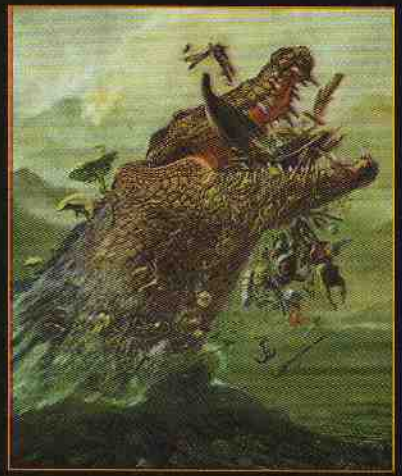
"Over the last ten years, more people have been independently self-publishing games, many of incredible talent and sophistication," said John Kim, who coordinates the awards. "There are so many games that it can be hard to find the ones you really want. The awards are one way of addressing this."

Check out and take part in the Indie RPG awards at **rpg-awards.com**.

OPEN DESIGN III

Want to have your say in a professionally made adventure? Through **open_design.livejournal.com,** you can join dozens of other patrons and take part in directing the work of veteran game designer and author of *Dungeon's* Dungeoncraft column, Wolfgang Baur, in creating an adventure to your specifications. The third project of this type, Baur explores cursed *Castle Shadowcrag*, a history-haunted site on the Plane of Shadow. Besides the new adventure, GMs can also check out design essays and Q&A sessions to learn how to write top-notch adventures of their own.

THIS MONTH IN DUNGEON #145



THE DISTRACTION

by Tim Hitchcock

A band of settlers awaits certain death upon the vicious blades of massing gnoll hordes. Can the PCs distract the ravenous army long enough for reinforcements to arrive? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

VILE ADDICTION

by Stefan Happ, Stephen S. Greer, B. Matthew Conklin III, Tom Ganz, and Ashavan Doyon

A horrific drug has siezed the population of the strange city of Exag, yet confronting its source only reveals the true extent of a dire new threat. Part one of the three-part Seeds of Sehan Campaign Arc, this is a D&D adventure for 8th-level characters. A backdrop of Exag is included.

CITY OF BROKEN IDOLS

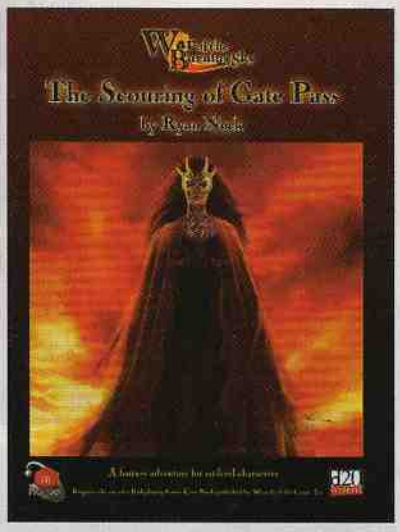
by Tito Leati

The central mesa of the Isle of Dread is taboo to the locals—a place shrouded in mystery and cloaked in rumor. The time has come to confront what dwells atop the island's bestial crown. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 13th-level characters.

FIN FANG FOOM!

This year, WizKids (**wizkids.com**) unleashes another massive convention-exclusive HeroClix figure: Fin Fang Foom. Jack Kirby's infamous alien dragon and long the scourge of numerous Marvel heroes, can now also rule your dining room table. The colossal dragon features nearly 50 slots of powers and a unique Rampage Dial that allows him to tear the battlefield apart, reshaping the terrain and taking HeroClix with it.

WizKids also plans to release a Mighty Thor HeroClix figure to aid heroes in their fight against Foom. Both convention exclusives will be available at Gen Con Indy and other conventions this summer.

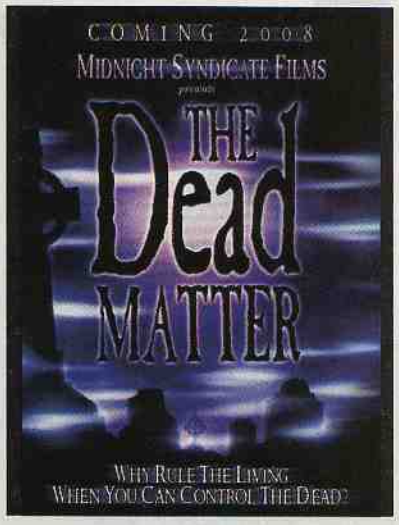


SET THE SKY ON FIRE

New from EN Publishing comes the *War of the Burning Sky Campaign Saga*, a twelve-part series of downloadable adventures starting with *"The Scouring of the Gate Pass."*

"WotBS is an epic campaign saga spanning an entire war-torn continent," said ENWorld owner Russell Morrissey. "The saga lets the players see the mighty and terrible face of war in a world of magic."

Color battlemaps support each adventure, as well as a free downloadable guide. Adventures can be purchased individually or all at once with a twelve-issue subscription. You can check out more news, art, and ongoing discussions about *War of the Burning Sky* at **enworld.org**.



THE DEAD MATTER

Midnight Syndicate (**midnightsyndicate.com**), the creators of the official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Soundtrack*, are teaming up with Robert Kurtzman (producer of *From Dusk till Dawn*) to produce *The Dead Matter*, a horror-suspense film. "My contributions to the storyline and production concept were definitely influenced by my years of playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and *Vampire: The Masquerade*," said director and co-writer Edward Douglas, of Midnight Syndicate. "We plan to blend elements of the score with new material and atmospherics so that the CD will be an extension of the movie." *The Dead Matter* releases in theaters in 2008.

RPGA REPORT *by Chris Tulach*

A few weeks ago, gamers from around the globe descended on snowy Washington DC for D&D Experience, a bonanza of RPGA campaigns and miniatures events. We don't have room to talk about every one of the hundreds of events that went on in February, so here are a few highlights.

Members of Wizards of the Coast's R&D and D&D Brand team were on hand to show sneak previews of several products appearing later this year, including *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits* and *Monster Manual V*. At the yearly RPGA Members' Meeting, other big announcements related to the Undermountain "mini-campaign," a three-part super-dungeon adventure debuting at this year's Gen Con Indy. Also unveiled were plans to adapt the massive *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits* to LIVING GREYHAWK.

Players took on hordes of monsters on their way through the D&D Delve, as well as special adventures like the *City of Brass* for LIVING GREYHAWK and *Cairn of Stone Hearts* for XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS. This convention also brought both the LIVING DEATH and MARK OF HEROES campaigns to a close, their final adventures attracting crowds of nostalgic fans.

There was also plenty for D&D Miniatures players to do, with huge events like the *Unhallowed* prerelease. The *D&D Miniatures* Limited Championship and the first *D&D Miniatures* Constructed Qualifier of the season rounded out the premiere events at the show.

You can check out more about what happened at D&D Experience and what we have planned for later this year at **rpga.com.**

More than fifteen years ago, *Shadowrun* debuted as a hybrid tabletop roleplaying game bridging the gap between fantasy and science fiction. In the *Shadowrun* universe trolls, orks, elves, and dwarves all "co-exist" in the long shadows cast by the megacorporations in a distopian, cyberpunk future. Currently published by FanPro, *Shadowrun* (**shadowrunrpg.com**) remains one of the most popular RPGs in gaming.

Being a game of corporations and corruption, hardware and hackers, the *Shadowrun* world is uniquely suited to make the transition to the electronic medium. Having had several incarnations on previous platforms, *Shadowrun* is getting a long-awaited installment on the Xbox 360.

The new *Shadowrun* straddles the line between the frenetic, action-packed combat system of a first-person shooter and the story-driven depth of an RPG. Players can take on the single-player story mode alone or battle up to sixteen other players online via Xbox Live. Characters have access to swords, magic, and a variety of high-tech weaponry as the story takes them through the streets of a city in 2031 Brazil (preceding much of the tabletop RPG's timeline). There, they find themseves embroiled in a fight between a megacorporation and an ancient society over who will control magic, which has newly returned to the world.

Shadowrun for the Xbox 360 is scheduled to release in the coming months from Microsoft Game Studios and Fasa Studio. Check out screenshots and more news at **shadowrun.com.**

HEIRONEOUS

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

illustrated by Andrew Hou • cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

Heironeous, The Invincible, The Archpaladin, is the champion of rightful combat and chivalrous deeds. He is the patron of those who fight for honor, justice, and the fair and good order of things. Beloved of the gods, he is gifted by them with many powers to fight evil, particularly against his half-brother Hextor. Long worshiped only by officers, leaders, and paladins, he has reached out to the common soldier to be the patron of anyone who raises a blade in the advancement of good and justice. He is a shining example of all that is knightly and righteous.

CORE BELIEFS: HEIRONIOUS

THE BASICS

Heironeous is a lawful good deity. Most of his faithful are lawful good, with about one-third neutral good and a tiny minority lawful neutral. Formal attire is a dark blue robe with silver trim, with senior priests having more ornate trim. Combat attire is traditionally chain mail, half-plate, or full plate with a blue and silver tabard worn over the armor. Heironeous is called the Invincible, the Valorous Knight, and the Archpaladin. His symbol is a white hand clutching a silver lightning bolt. His realm, the Fields of Glory, is in the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia, although he often leaves this place to battle evil on other planes. His portfolio is justice, valor, chivalry, and honor. His domains are Good, Law, and War. His traditional favored weapon is the battleaxe but the longsword has become prominent in recent years. Most of his worshipers are paladins, good fighters and monks, and clerics.

Heironeous (hair OH nee us) is a vibrant and powerful battlefield champion of that which is right and good. He exemplifies all the best knightly qualities—chivalry, justice, honor, daring, and valor—and is the patron of countless paladins. Although originally an Oeridian god, his worship has spread beyond those people to all who believe in bravery, order, and the right to act against evil. His greatest foe and opposite is his half-brother Hextor, god of tyranny, and their faithful clash frequently.

Heironeous is confident and proud, but not stubborn or foolhardy—he is perfectly aware of his own strengths and weaknesses and is not afraid to turn to another when confronted with an obstacle he cannot overcome alone. His willingness to work with others and utilize their strengths makes him a natural leader—a trait he encourages in his own worshipers. Heironeous believes pacifism to be a luxury bought with the blood of the valorous and it is cowardly to refuse to fight evil and oppression if you have the chance.

Heironeous's natural form is that of a tall handsome man with metallic coppery skin, auburn hair, and amber eyes, dressed in fine chainmail and carrying a battleaxe. At birth, his skin was imbued with a magical substance called meersalm, making him invulnerable to all but the most powerful weapons and giving him his unusual coloration. He sometimes disguises himself as a mercenary, old man, or a young boy, all with normal coloration and raiment, but usually wearing chain mail. His battle axe can shrink to one-twentieth of its normal size and back again in an instant, allowing him to carry it in any form. Traditionally, the battleaxe has been his favored weapon, but in recent years he has also encouraged the use of the longsword to interest mortals who feel it is a more knightly weapon. Both weapons are considered favored for his religion.

Heironeous teaches that the world is a dangerous place full of evil things waiting for the opportunity to strike. Those with the strength to stand up to evil are honor-bound to do so. The constant presence of evil poses a never-ending series of challenges to those who fight for justice and protect the weak and innocent. Vigilance is important, but not to the extent that it causes good to mistakenly turn on its own in suspicion (that is the nature of evil, not good). One must act honorably at all times, as the ends do not justify the means, but honor does not dictate foolishness—a lone knight against a powerful demon is not barred from using stealth to find the best position from which to attack. Trickery and outright deception, though, is always unacceptable. His faithful uphold the virtues of justice and chivalry and strike down those who pervert and destroy these ideals. They face danger with certainty and calm so as to set an example for others. For the Archpaladin's chosen, glory is the reward for defeating evil and virtue comes from upholding the tenets of the faith.

Heironeous is a war god and utilizes the best military tactics in all circumstances. Generals and officers pray to him for guidance and wisdom in planning and executing battle plans. He prefers daring and aggressive tactics but understands the need for conservative strategies, especially when greatly outnumbered or limited in resources. His chivalrous code requires a soldier to accept an enemy's surrender, although any treachery on the part of prisoners is justification for a swift execution. Likewise, he teaches that harming civilians is always evil and unjust.

Although primarily a god of aggressive action, he is also a protector god and attracts many worshipers whose lives are at risk from nearby evil—in particular the Shield Lands (see sidebar). His religion is popular in all nonevil lands, counting faithful among the elven, half-elven, and dwarven populations.

Services to Heironeous include singing battle hymns, offerings made to a copper statue of the god, and the sharing of strength-giving foods such as hearty meats, full-bodied red wines (in moderation), and spiced kara-fruit stew. As an army travels on its stomach, some Heironeans become skilled cooks to keep their soldiers well-fed and happy when on the march. The Invincible's temples are adorned in blue and silver and behind every altar is a copper statue of the god in silver mail with seven silver bolts radiating from behind his head.

Heironeous's church is organized like an army, with each temple belonging to an overall hierarchy and his followers having a clear chain of command. Promotions in the church are based on experience, skill, and valorous deeds, so it is uncommon (but not impossible) for a higher-level

HOLY TEXTS

While many of the texts venerated by Heironeans are great law codexes, others deal with matters of faith and the code by which the faithful conduct themselves.

The Book of the Code: This volume consists of four chapters, with the first stating the Heironean Code, while the remaining three give numerous examples of proper behavior according to the Code, including unusual circumstances and corner cases to help explain the nuances of interpreting the code, often with specific examples from history. The example chapters are much longer than the first, and different copies of the book may have more or fewer examples, or attribute "anonymous" examples to particular heroes important to the scribe's temple. Some of these minor differences lead to arguments between different temples, but the examples in question concern such minor issues that they do not lead to splits within the church—especially since the Duty to the Archpaladin (which states that obedience to Heironeous is more important than obedience to church elders or a temple) overrules any apparent contradiction. Some "traveling copies" of the book omit the last three chapters entirely. These are often used for basic instruction of layfolk or in missionary work, where the larger text would be cumbersome, confusing, or overwhelming.

Book of Penitence: This work describes the achievements of Ferrante, a great paladin of Heironeous who faced a powerful evil and won out despite magical temptations from his foe. Ferrante disappeared hundreds of years ago, presumably starting a voyage across the sea to face an even greater threat. Although not universally held as a saint, at least one large temple holds him as its patron, and it believes he was transformed into an angel to battle evil after his death. Also called the Just Book, its first chapter contains the code, with the remaining chapters describing the events of Ferrante's paladinhood and using examples from his life to explain the code, particularly how to overcome temptations and follow the true path. The authors are Ferrante himself and Onwald Sidney (his closest companion and chronicler). The last hundred or so pages of the original book have been torn out, leaving a still-lengthy tome of 523 pages (all copies are of this damaged original and only contain the extant pages).

character to be subordinate to a lower-level one. A character's class has little to do with his rank in the church. Several senior officials are fighters rather than clerics or paladins, although in most cases these non-spellcaster church officers are not involved in decisions that require knowledge of magic. Lower-ranking members of the church are expected to follow orders from those of higher ranks. Temples usually have a well-stocked armory and one or more means of magical communication (this is especially so in dangerous lands).

A CLERIC'S ROLE

Heironeous's priesthood is run like a military organization and a cleric is expected to obey the orders of his superiors (although there is a way to appeal an unjust order). Clerics should study military tactics and historical warfare, and it is customary to learn how to use a battleaxe or a longsword. Senior priests expect their staff to keep physically fit, and this requirement is relaxed only slightly for older members of a temple. When age keeps clerics from maintaining an active physical roles they are often sent to work as judges, strategists, and military instructors, particularly in places that require skilled soldiers or paladins.

Experienced clerics of Heironeous serve as military officers in local armies or as advisors to officers. Novices are often assigned to military outposts or chartered adventuring companies, or are given open-ended assignments to seek out evil in a specific area and destroy whatever sources they find. A few wise and charismatic clerics are tasked with finding promising individuals of various talents who can be recruited to serve Heironeous's causes (even if they are not interested in joining the church). In war, clerics take a paladinlike leadership role, leading others into battle and confronting evil directly. The church has frequent crusades against one evil or another and available clerics should join the cause or try to support it in some way (by donating money, magic, or knowledge). Clerics should also exemplify the church's chivalric code.

The church expects clerics of Heironeous to be brave in the face of danger, although not blindly or foolishly so—a noble death confronting evil is a fine thing, but retreating from a superior force to confront it later from a position of strength is a wiser plan. Clerics should be daring, willing to take risks to achieve great things, but not reckless or too dependent on luck. Most prefer area attack spells, personal-enhancement spells, and

magic that can turn the tide of battle rather than defensive or healing spells—such magic is best left to clerics of those interests.

A typical day for a cleric involves waking early for prayer, a hearty breakfast, some light exercise, study, physical and martial training, and meetings to discuss local threats and problems. If a cleric cannot find any immediate task needing his axe's attention, he seeks out nearby layfolk to aid them with anything that requires his expertise—dealing with local bandits, a hungry monster, or even just a few tips on how to better wield a pitchfork when wolves come sniffing after the sheep.

Clerics pray at dawn, either alone or as part of a larger service led by a ranking church official. Spell preparation takes place after morning prayers. Because lower-ranking followers might be reassigned to distant temples to aid a local cause, even the youngest of them are used to travel and dealing with different cultures. Thanks to their unswerving devotion to good

THE SHIELD LANDS

On Oerth (the original world of Heironeous's religion), the Free City of Greyhawk is on the southern bank of a deep lake called the Nyr Dyv, and the northern shore of that lake is a country called the Shield Lands. Founded by agreement between local nobles, the Shield Lands represented a bulwark against the chaos, banditry, and general evildoing common in the lands to the north of them, protecting the civilized countries to the south and west. Their dedication to Heironeous and this duty allowed them to hold firm for centuries, but in recent years an army of undead and demons commanded by the demigod-king Iuz the Evil managed to sweep into the Shield Lands and claim much of the resulting ruins. Now the valiant survivors rally in their remaining holdings, planning surgical strikes on occupied territory, although they know reclaiming the region will be a long and bitter fight.

and long history of protecting others from evil, clerics of Heironeous are well-respected and easily find hospitality in most good lands, although they are careful not to overstay their welcome.

As with any army, the clergy has many ranks and titles. New clerics are called the Glorious or (collectively) the Valorous Host. Priestly titles are, in ascending order, Hero of the Third Rank, Hero of the Second Rank, Hero of the First Rank, Champion of Glory, Knight Gallant, Knight Courageous, Knight Valiant, and Knight Champion. Senior clerics are called Paragons, and those who command temple armies are Paragon-Generals.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CORE RELIGIONS

Heironeous's attitude toward other faiths is simple: those that fight for the side of good (particularly the more warlike gods) are his allies, while those who promote evil or suffering are his enemies. In particular he spares no effort to thwart the plans of his half-brother Hextor and battle him at every opportunity. Heironeous's protector aspect makes him a rival to the demigoddess Mayaheine (see "Core Beliefs: Pelor," in *Dragon* #346), but their shared lawful good alignment and her subservience to her patron Pelor means there is no significant conflict between the two faiths. Heironeous sometimes travels with a hero-deity named Murlynd, a paladin he sponsored to godhood, and the younger power's tiny following is quite friendly with the Invincible's church (much in the same way the faiths of Pelor and Mayaheine work together).

A PALADIN'S ROLE

Paladins of Heironeous have most of the same duties and obligations as clerics, except their focus is even more on battle—not surprising for a god of chivalry where the clerics act much like paladins. To those in the church, paladins are called templars (a title they share with other martial-oriented characters who swear devotion to the church). Paladins spend less time studying and more time drilling and competing. Some of these bouts require them to face four or more opponents at once—usually drawn from the ranks of temple guards, who gladly step up for the honor of training with a champion of the faith. Although these battles use nonlethal weapons, they are held to test the paladin's endurance and it is rare for a competing paladin to go to sleep without at least a few bruises, even after the use of lay on hands. With the end of daylight they eat and hold prayer vigils, asking for strength of character, arm, and heart, and calling upon the skill and faith of their predecessors.

Like clerics, paladins are required to swear to the three duties of the Heironean Code. Many paladins adorn their armor, weapons, or garments with three lightning bolts as a reminder of the duties. Tattooing is rare among the faith (most see it as a heathen practice) but a few paladins go so far as to tattoo these marks on a forearm or hand, usually with the Invincible's holy symbol at the center flanked by a second and third bolt.

Most paladins join a holy order within the church. The four best known are the Order of the Shining

THE HEIRONEAN CODE

As a god of chivalry and patron of paladins, Heironeous has a chivalric code, perhaps the earliest example of its kind. The Heironean Code consists of three sets of duties.

Duty to the People: This pertains to mercy, courage, valor, justice, protection of the weak, and fidelity to church superiors and officers of just law. Included in this part of the code is the willingness to give your life to save another, whether for a poor peasant, a knight, or a king. This is the aspect of the code that most layfolk and members of other faiths are familiar with, and many paladin orders exemplify the concepts of this duty quite literally.

Duty to the Archpaladin: This pertains to obedience to Heironeous, devotion to the church, championing good against evil, generosity, and obeying the needs of the faith and church above that of mortals. This part of the code allows a cleric to disobey an order (regardless of the source) if it conflicts with the teachings of his faith or the church. In particular, it means that direct missives from Heironeous or his agents supersede any church law, which prevents corruption in church officials.

Duty to a Lady: This pertains to courtly love, devotion to a particular lady and after her all other ladies, with a general respect toward all women. Officially the code retains this male-oriented language (from older times when the clergy was entirely male) and has no equivalent for female clerics to devote themselves to a particular lord, but in practice women in the church are held to the same standard as men in regard to dealing with the opposite gender. There are many examples of chaste female clerics oath-binding themselves to just nobles. Some progressive members of the church believe this section of the code is redundant to the Duty to the People and wish to fold its rules into that part. Although there is resistance to this among the traditionalists, there have been no objections from the celestial realm, so it might occur within a generation.

APHORISMS

The everyday saying and adages of Heironeous's faithful tell a great deal about their beliefs and morals. The samples here represent those aphorisms that are most commonly used by today's clergy.

By the Archpaladin's Skin. This oath refers to Heironeous' magically-hardened copper skin, meaning the person swearing the oath considers his word unbreakable and everlasting. Among layfolk it is used in a similar manner as "by the skin of my teeth," implying success by the narrowest margin, perhaps with subtle intervention by the god himself.

For Honor and Valor! This battle cry states two of the ideals of Heironeous, reaffirming their role in the mind of the faithful. Because it is assumed that a follower of Heironeous is acting in the name of justice and chivalry, calling out those ideals is not necessary. In effect, it is a request or pledge that the followers actions earns him honor and demonstrates his valor. It is often used instead of the Invincible's name or title when turning undead or as a closing in a letter.

May the Axe Grow Great. Coined by the Knights of the Holy Shielding, it refers to Heironeous' size-changing axe and is used to express the hope that good thrives and grows, that the faithful reclaim the Shield Lands, and that better times will come. In recent months it has been used as a battle cry, implying that evil is on the loose and Heironeous is ready to smite it.

Right Makes Might. This expression is a counter to "might makes right" (an argument used by many tyrants through the ages). Heironeans believe that their dedication to the principles of chivalry, justice, and honor gives them the might to topple evil, right wrongs, and face incredible horrors without flinching. Their faith is the white lightning that keeps their spine stiff and breaks the backs of oppressors.

Sword, the Brotherhood of the Lance Unbroken, the Copper Crusaders, and the Knights of the Holy Shielding. This last group is the largest and most famous. Paladins in the church use the same rank titles as priests, and might have a separate title representing a rank in their holy order.

The church requires paladins to spend at least one month each year within a temple praying and training. This is usually done in week-long stints every season rather than all at once.

KNIGHTS OF THE HOLY SHIELDING

This elite band of paladin knights was the core army of the Shield Lands. Although their headquarters in the Shield Lands were overrun by Iuz's demon-undead army, they remain a strong knighthood and have dedicated themselves to retaking their homeland. Led by Lady Katarina (cousin of the previous leader, an earl of the land long missing and presumed killed in Iuz's war), they wage an ongoing battle to reclaim territory and hold it against evil.

The knights are the moral and physical centers of the armies of the Shield Lands, inspiring great heroism and patriotism among the common troops and civilians. They are greatly respected by their own people and other good folk, but are despised by Iuz's forces and those who serve evil.

Most of the Knights serve Heironeous, although a few worship other good deities such as Pelor. The order does not accept anyone below a minimum level of skill and experience (generally achieved at 7th level) and applicants must provide evidence of a heroic deed to be considered for membership. Induction into the order is done during a

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private ceremony in the applicant's patron's temple. Before the citadel was seized, induction meant the new member received two weapons and a suit of full plate armor marked with the order's symbol (a black tower on a red field, the same as the Shield Lands itself), but now these items are scarce and initiates must supply their own arms and armor (reclaiming stores of these items from contested lands is one way to earn the respect of order). Currently, the order's greatest asset is its excellent information network. Any member (or good friend of one) can pass requests for information to a knight and expect it to reach the entire order within a week, and any answers can be expected in as much time.

Many knights roam nearby lands doing mercenary work for good lords, generating revenue to support the war on the home front. They are always eager for news of evil magic items and factions, and an adventuring group in need of help regarding such things can usually find a knight or two willing to assist them.

HOLIDAYS

The church has few major holidays. These holidays note the anniversaries of visitations by Heironeous, great battles, and significant victories over evil, but the church prefers to focus on more practical matters in its daily operations. Each regional temple might celebrate different anniversaries relevant to the local members.

Fortnight's Feast: This two-week-long event celebrates the victories won by the Heironean armies of the Kingdom of Aerdy (before that land came to be ruled by priests of Hextor). Named for the Battle of a Fortnight's Length, in which the Aerdy vanquished the cavalry of Nyrond (the last nation to join the Aerdy conquerors), the festival lasts from late Wealsun (June) to early Reaping (July). As the Great Kingdom slid into decadence and evil, this holiday has slowly lost its original significance and now serves as a festival of jousting, swordplay, reenactments of battles fought across the land, and bardic recitation of the deeds of long-fallen heroes.

The Day of Just Rebellion: This

commemorates the battles fought to tear the land of Almor free from the evil kings of Aerdy. Held late in Coldeven (March), this holy day reminds the faithful that justice is not served by tyranny and honor is sometimes best upheld through rebellion (which is an aspect of the second Duty of the Heironean Code). This holiday is observed mainly by the faithful and its practice does not extend outside the temples. The followers pray, meditate, and discuss when rebellion against rulers is the appropriate and just action. As many tyrants have attacked Heironean temples on this holiday, it also commemorates the death of martyrs.

Valormight: This holy day predates the founding of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy and is celebrated on one of the last days of Ready'reat (November). It is a remembrance of a ten-month war between the faithful and the followers of Hextor; despite being outnumbered six to one (as the tradition tells), the Valorous Host held its own and managed to confine the Hextorians to lands east of the Flanmi River. Few tales survive of this conflict and the holiday has evolved to include honoring all champions who fell battling Hextor and his minions.

THREE MYTHS

The faithful of Heironeous tend to avoid spreading wild and fantastical myths about their patron, instead focusing on myths grounded in some sense of reality.

Beloved of the Gods: Heironeous was given many blessings by the "Powers of Good" to make him their champion. Although most of these blessing are unspecified (one is known to be the first meersalm, presented to his mother), they are his reward for adhering to good and law, as well as for accomplishing much more than his patrons ever expected possible. Just as these abilities are rewards for continuing to serve the ideals of good, the powers his followers gain for devotion to his cause are rewards from the god for following his example. In effect, this story teaches a lesson of "do not forget that your greatness is an aspect of Heironeous's own," which encourages humility and continuing devotion to the Invincible.

The Blinding Light: Not so much a myth as a cautionary example of a rival faith, this anecdote talks about the church of Pholtus, an inflexible god of light and law. Clerics of Pholtus are unbending in their devotion and certain in their authority when it comes to law, but their fanaticism makes them waste their energy in pointless conflicts with other lawful churches (including Heironeous). To the Heironeans, Pholtus's church has it backward

(law is more important than good, the letter of the law is more important than the spirit, blind obedience is better than ever doubting an order). The Invincible's church counts the church of Pholtus as a cool ally and is careful to not speak of this matter outside the privacy of their own temples.

The Broken Brotherhood: Heironeous and Hextor were not always rivals. When they were still young, the half brothers were friends, although Heironeous was fairer and stronger. Eventually, Hextor was consumed with jealousy and anger toward his brother and devoted himself to the powers of evil. Heironeous tried to reconcile with Hextor, but the younger brother would have none of it, and eventually the Archpaladin had to accept that his brother was unredeemable. From that day he promised no quarter. This myth teaches that while some of the more soft-hearted deities believe that there is hope to turn any evil to goodness, the Heironeans know that many evil things, such as demons, are truly irredeemable. If Heironeous understands that one day he will put his own brother to the sword as just punishment for evil, his followers should not be swayed by honeyed words and crocodile tears from lesser evils. Mercy is a virtue of the code, but mercy toward the blackest heart is foolish and dangerous.

PRESTIGE CLASS SUGGESTIONS

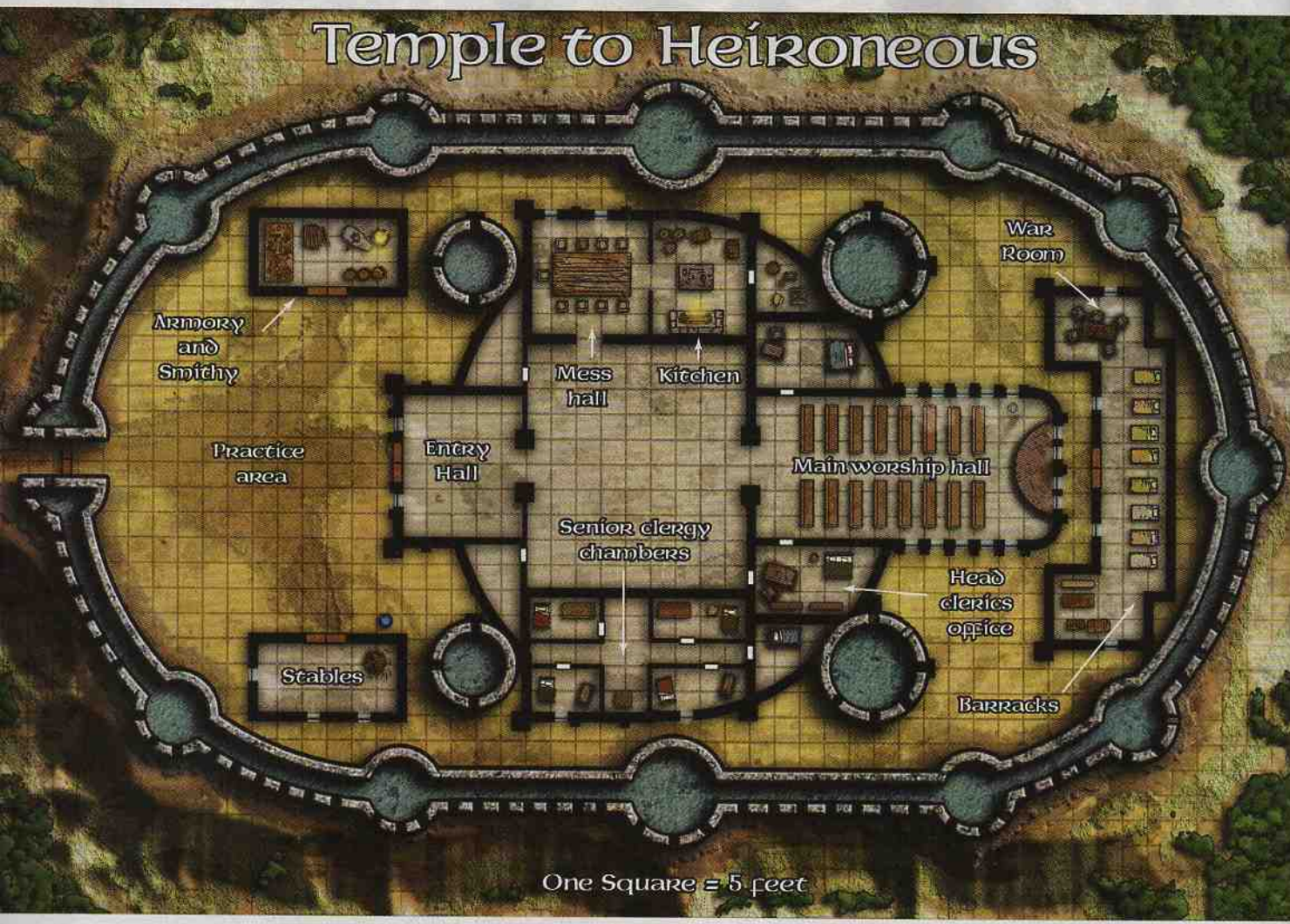
Few experienced worshipers choose prestige classes, as their knightly code places them a cut above clerics and paladins of other faiths, but those who do take them pursue prestige classes that augment their knightly aspects, such as cavalier (*Complete Warrior*, 19), divine champion (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, 42), and divine crusader (*Complete Divine*, 33). Some especially devoted to a particular temple become pious templars (*Complete Divine*, 50). A quest-minded hero might become a consecrated harrier (*Complete Divine*, 28) or dragonslayer (*Draconomicon*, 125). Members of other classes who wish to be more paladinlike sometimes become holy liberators (*Complete Divine*, 45). Those who are embalmed in meersalm might become anointed knights (*Book of Exalted Deeds*, 49) to better understand the relationship between their alchemical and martial powers.

RELICS OF THE FAITH

Not surprisingly, almost all of the relics cherished by Heironeous's faithful are tools of battle. The following three examples are just a sample of the large collection of weapons and armors held in high regard by his temples.

The Invulnerable Coat of Arnd: This fine chain shirt was either owned by or created by the legendary Oeridian hero Arnd of Tdon, who established the first paladin orders of Heironeous among his people more than a thousand years ago. The armor fully protects the wearer from any attack that hits it (although the wearer's limbs are still vulnerable, so this is not complete protection). It is said to provide resistance to acid, cold, electricity, and fire, as well as most magic. Various legends equate other minor powers with it, although the sources conflict each other. The item is famous outside of the church and many do not know its associations with Heironeous, but his worshipers consider it a sacred artifact of the faith.

Meersalm: Although not a rare or single item, meersalm is a magical substance unique to the church of Heironeous—a portion of the same coppery liquid the Invincible's mother, Stern Alia, embalmed him in to make him invulnerable to weapons. Any creature that receives this treatment (a carefully protected secret of the church) gains similar protection. Every temple has a tiny amount of this wondrous material, used for certain ceremonies but kept within its container. A member of the church who wishes to be embalmed with it must prove his worthiness and pay for it to be manufactured in sufficient quantity for the ritual. Meersalm gives the recipient damage reduction 10/adamantine, and if a weapon's damage is completely absorbed the weapon might break (see the *meersalm skin* spell). This protection lasts for 1 year so long as the character upholds the tenets of Heironeous. Those who



lose this protection are ostracized by the church.

Red Thunderbolt: This +2 *shocking thundering battleaxe* is made of magically hardened copper and inscribed with Heironeous' symbol. It has all the properties of a *holy avenger*, damages creatures as if it were silver, and sheds *light* (as per the spell). Forged and wielded by the paladin Azkava Mor two centuries ago, he used it to battle servants of Hextor and mighty devils, once even traveling into the Nine Hells of Baator itself to reclaim a magical coffer containing the souls of seven righteous priests. When he fell to a trio of pit fiends the axe vanished, perhaps spirited away by an angel of Heironeous. Visions of the axe sometimes guide young paladins to a great destiny.

NEW DIVINE SPELLS

While few of Heironeous's clerics research new spells, the Archpaladin has granted numerous new ones to his faithful over the years, to help stem the tide of evil.

Bolt of Glory

Evocation [Good]
Level: Clr 3

This spell functions like *searing light*, except that the spell delivers raw positive energy resembling a silver bolt of lightning rather than a blast of light. Creatures from evil Outer Planes or from the Negative Energy Plane take damage as if they were undead. Creatures from good Outer Planes or the Positive Energy Plane take no damage.

Meersalm Skin

Abjuration
Level: Clr 6
Components: V, S, M

This spell functions like *stoneskin* except if the spell absorbs all the damage dealt by a weapon, the weapon must make a Fortitude saving throw or take 3d6 points of damage.

The target's skin takes on a metallic copper coloration for the duration of the spell.

Material Component: A vial of meersalm worth 250 gp.

Shield of Heironeous

Abjuration [Force]
Level: Clr 2, Pal 2

This spell functions like *shield*, except that instead of an invisible

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Heironeous's clerics do not often rely on summoned creatures and most of the celestial beings that serve him already appear on the *summon monster* lists. Clerics can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster II

Aasimar fighter 2*

Summon Monster IV

Aasimar paladin 4*

Summon Monster IX

Young bronze dragon*
Young silver dragon*

* This creature has the extraplanar subtype but otherwise has the normal statistics for a creature of its kind.

disk it creates a barely-visible shield bearing Heironeous's holy symbol. The shield and symbol do not obscure vision in any way.

NPC CONTACTS FOR CLERICS OF HEIRONEOUS

Characters who face the forces of evil can often count upon the Invicible's followers for aid and succor. The following are just two of the allies available.

Karistyne (LG female human paladin 15 of Heironeous) is the leader of a group of adventurers who own and maintain a castle (named for her) on a plateau below the Abbor-Alz Mountains. The castle has five towers and is a place of safety for adventurers and travelers in the Abbor-Alz or the adjacent Bright Desert. She sees her role as seeking out powerful evil monsters in the mountains and destroying them. The castle has three mounted dragon heads as trophies of her work, as well as the heads of manticores and wyverns. It is a matter of hospitality for her to welcome adventurers, although she checks their auras for evil before allowing them into her fortress.

Her allies and fellow residents include Aaron Marander (NG male human fighter 13), Caralin Arvendis (N male half-elf fighter 3/cleric 10 of Labelas Enoreth, elven god of time), Helena Stanmaer (N female human cleric 12 of Fharlanghn), and Shianne Stormhanded (N female elf wizard 13) and her cohort Gasharin Heflorannis (N male elf fighter 8), as well as 40 guards and 20 specialists (rangers, a stonemason, armorers, and a ballista crew). A frequent guest is Ambara (LG female young adult gold dragon), although only Karistyne and her adventuring group knows Ambara's true identity. Although relatively close to the Free City of Greyhawk, they reject its authority, as Karistyne considers it a city of thieves. She greatly respects the leader of the city's griffon-riders (with whom she trades news), and due to his influence she and the city have an understanding: she rules an area out to ten miles from her castle and does not have to pay tribute.

Karistyne is nearly 50 years old, but due to a magic potion she has the appearance and vigor of someone ten years younger. She has blonde hair, olive skin, dark eyes, and a very strong build. Fearless and battle-hardened, she doesn't take kindly to threats, even from the traitorous mage Rary, brooding in the desert. She is a crusader and doesn't like waiting in the castle for longer than a week. She respects straight-talking people and brave adventurers but is still polite to those of other nonevil faiths (as evidenced by her friends) and those who use subtler means.

Karistyne is a good contact for mid-level parties who need a base of operations in a dangerous area. Although extended stays and abuse of her hospitality is frowned upon, she welcomes weary heroes, especially if they bring news, tales of great valor, or trade goods. She or her friends might join a high-level group on a dangerous quest. Because of her contacts with many adventuring bands, even low-level heroes might know of her indirectly or work for someone she has helped.

Champion of Glory Arminder Nogg (LG male half-orc cleric 5 of Heironeous) is a young priest serving the Sanctum of Heironeous in the Free City of Greyhawk. He was left on the doorstep of the Sanctum as an infant, his mother unknown but presumably shamed by her half-breed child. The temple took him in and although they expected little of him other than simple labor, he always listened attentively during prayers and eventually became a novice. Although young, he has already proven his worth to the church, acting as a spy, messenger, and soldier in the contested areas of the Shield Lands (his race making it possible for him to infiltrate the fringe of Iuz's orc battalions without too much trouble). Any snickers that used to follow him stopped after he bested a ranking paladin in a duel, and all who know him respect this young priest and expect great things of him.

Arminder is tall, with sallow gray skin, black hair, yellow-flecked brown eyes, and small tusks. When not trying to blend in with evil orcs he dresses in typical Heironean style, proud to walk in his silver-and-blue tabard and chainmail, bright-polished axe strapped high

on his back. Blunt and terse but not thick-headed, Arminder remains quiet unless spoken to, preferring to let his actions convince others of his value. His voice is gravelly but without an orc accent (he speaks Orc perfectly due to very hard work).

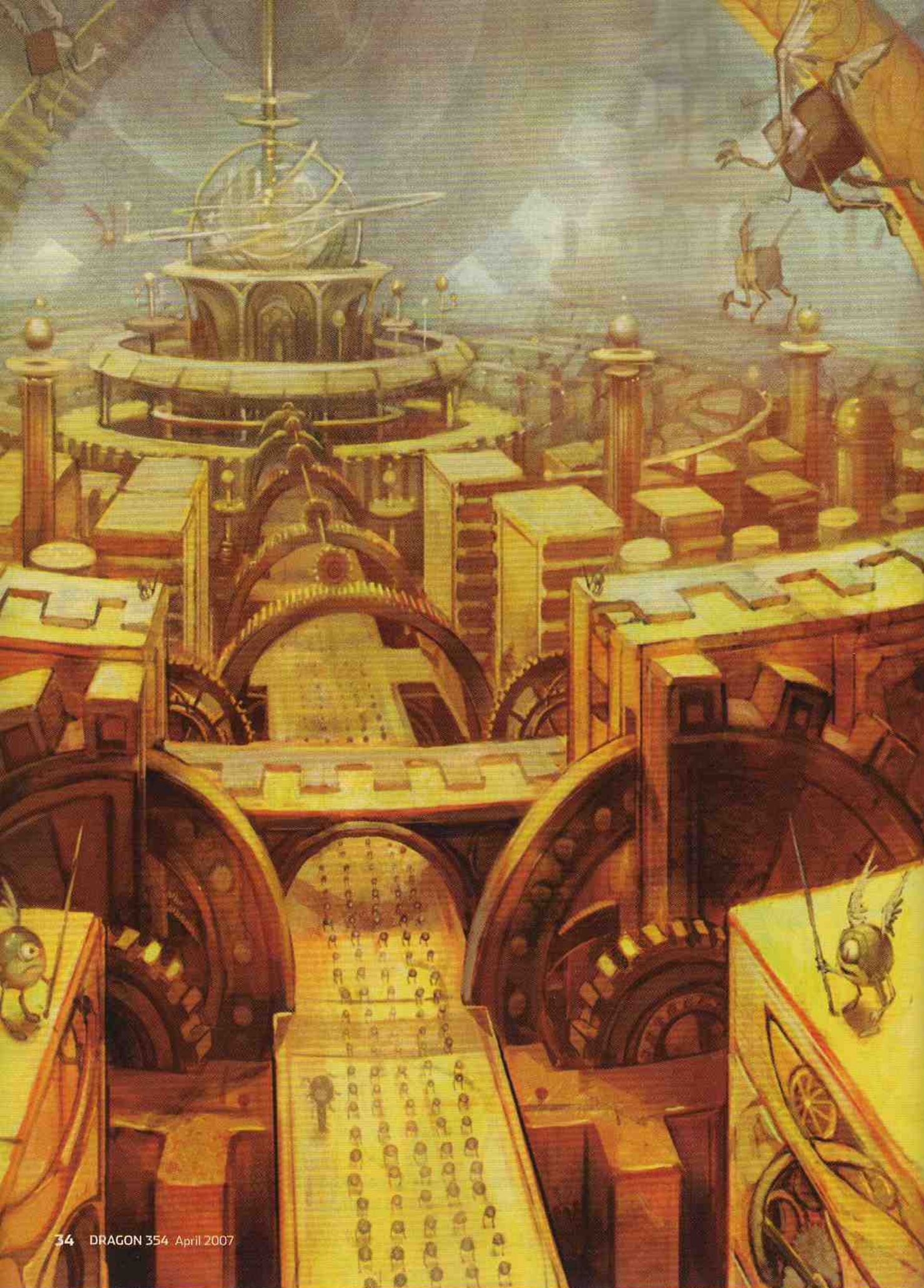
Arminder is a good contact for low-level heroes who need an "in" with the church. His temple might send him to find the PCs, bearing a message or summons. If the PCs are captured by orcs, he (having infiltrated the tribe and serving as its subchief) might be their key to escaping. He might join equal level PCs as hired muscle for a good cause or become a cohort to a higher-level PC.

PLANAR ALLY

Malchaus is a bold and courageous astral deva, very young (only a few decades old) and full of enthusiasm for the cause. He speaks loudly, whether complementing his allies or making challenges to his enemies. He is sometimes put in charge of groups of lesser celestials, although he occasionally leads them into danger by facing creatures suitable for his own strengths but beyond that of his subordinates. He likes making rallying speeches and in idle times he can be heard practicing ones he wants to use in the future—perhaps the only time he speaks quietly.

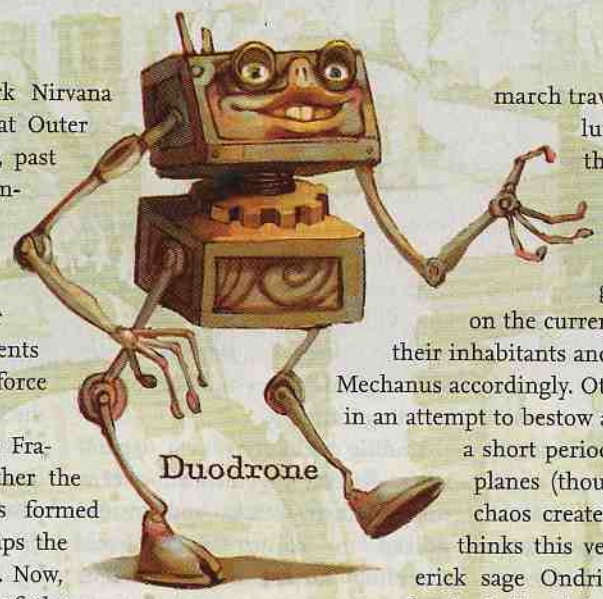
With coppery skin from his meersalm embalming (which combines with his natural durability to give him DR 10/adamantine and evil) Malchaus is usually seen as a reddish blur streaking toward a battle. He wields a +2 *holy battleaxe* rather than a +3 *disruption mace* but otherwise has the normal abilities of an astral deva. He prefers melee combat to using his spell-like abilities but doesn't hesitate to wield magic if he feels his opponents have an unfair advantage or are using summoned fiendish help.

Malchaus has all the personality traits one would expect of a paladin of Heironeous. He loves battling evil—when called by a mortal, he is willing to accept a very small payment as long as his opponents aren't likely to kill him, and if the enemy is a demon or devil known to him he might waive the payment entirely or put off the negotiation until afterward. This makes him very popular among the Invincible's clerics, so much so that on some days he might already be on the Material Plane when someone tries to conjure him (which means Heironeous sends someone else). He responds favorably to payments of magic armor, weapons, and augmenting items such as *belts of giant strength*.



Return of the Modrons

by Ken Marable • illustrated by Julie Dillon • special thanks to Tony DiTerlizzi



Deep in the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus, the great Outer Plane of absolute law, past the alien beauty of the formian hives, beyond the smoky foundries forging masses of inevitables, sits the realm of Regulus, home to the former masters of Mechanus, embodiments of the impersonal, unyielding force of order: the modrons.

In the past, sages within the Fraternity of Order debated whether the cogs of Mechanus themselves formed the modrons, or whether perhaps the modrons first shaped the gears. Now, however, few sages take note of the diminished race, and many wonder if their fate is sealed and their days numbered.

Recent Modron History

The history of the modron race is conceivably as old as the planes themselves and—as the modrons are obsessively detail oriented—would likely span thousands of volumes. In such a treatise's stead, several events in Mechanus's recent history bear mentioning.

The Rogue March

Every seventeen cycles (a cycle being the seventeen-year period of time it takes for the largest gear in Mechanus to make one rotation) the modrons tramp forth from Regulus in a mass procession known as the Great Modron March. Thousands upon thousands of them travel the Great Wheel, the entirety of the outer planes, with little apparent purpose other than to make the journey. A vast number of modrons are destroyed on this trek, but those who complete the march travel directly to their absolute leader, Primus, upon their return.

Some theorize that the march serves Primus as a means of gathering information on the current state of the planes and their inhabitants and to calibrate the gears of Mechanus accordingly. Others say modrons march in an attempt to bestow a sense of order, even for a short period of time, on each of the planes (though, with the amount of chaos created in their wake, no one thinks this very successful). The maverick sage Ondrild, before his untimely demise, believed that by going forth into such extreme environments, their purpose is to be destroyed, and thereby respawn as many modrons as possible. Facing such obstacles, this massive renewing of the modron race causes the newly promoted and spawned modrons to be stronger and more durable than the previous generation. Most reputable scholars find this view absurd.

Whatever the purpose, the Great Modron March has occurred every seventeen cycles since the most ancient of records—until recently. The Rogue March, as it has come to be called, occurred more than a century early and took a winding, chaotic course that wound up leaving a large number of modrons stranded on various planes. Taking advantage, some celestials have sought to convert these modrons to the cause of good, while fiends find them enjoyable playthings to torture and corrupt.

Very few know the dark truth behind the Rogue March and they guard this secret closely for fear of retribution. In truth, the long-dead Demon Prince Orcus was resurrected and sought divinity as Tenebrous, a vile god of the undead. Tenebrous slew Primus and took

his place within the Energy Pool, the seat of control over the race and much of Mechanus. From there he connected with every modron and ordered them to march prematurely to find any sign of his powerful weapon, the *Wand of Orcus*, as well as information on who betrayed him. When the march completed, he simply left.

Both the visages of Primus and Tenebrous, whom Orcus cast off, were left forever altered by their untimely end, yet proved too willful to merely die. They now exist as vestiges who only contact reality through the practitioners of pact magic (see *Tome of Magic* and DRAGON #341 for more information).

Corrupted Succession

The link with Tenebrous would soon prove to have a lasting impact on all modrons. With the death of Primus and Tenebrous leaving the Energy Pool, it came time for one of the four secundi, Primus's lieutenants, to take up the mantle of leadership. The evil within Tenebrous, however, left a taint within the modrons, and one secundus objected to the ascension of any of the others. The secundus invoked the ancient precept of challenge to determine who would ascend. Another secundus stepped up to meet the challenge, and the two departed to see who could slay the most chaotic beings in a week's time.

As one secundus began cutting through slaadi and other creatures of Limbo, the tainted one followed a more devious path. He ordered contingents of the lower caste modrons under his command to peaceful Bytopia, where they proceeded to destroy entire towns of the unsuspecting gnome petitioners. At the end of the challenge, both secundi declared victory. The other two, however, rejected the claim of the tainted secundi who used his army rather than performing the challenge on his own and, furthermore, slew beings of both chaos and good, beings who were not diametrically opposed to the modron order.

In a shocking display of fury, the tainted secundus stormed out of Regulus, taking nearly a million modrons with him, proceeding to Acheron, where he promised to build his military might until he could take Regulus by force and claim the mantle of Primus himself. Although the rightfully chosen secundus advanced to become the next Primus, the modron race was crippled.

Formian Invasion and Inevitable Encroachment

With the Tenebrous-tainted modrons departing Regulus, and countless more stranded throughout the planes, the formians saw a perfect opportunity to rid Mechanus of its dominant race. Several queens worked together to infest many of Regulus's outlying gears, but, although they conquered many areas held by their opponents for eons, the modrons prevented them from entering the heart of their city. With the Energy Pool intact, the modron forces continually replenished their numbers and held off the invading formians.

Finding themselves in a degrading stalemate, the formian queens stopped their attacks and instead worked to isolate the modrons, spreading further into Mechanus and converting many great gears into massive hives.

Although not nearly as aggressive, the inevitables also encroached deeply into the weakened modron territories. They held no malice toward the modrons. They merely needed additional resources for their foundries and found the native inhabitants easily driven off. Recently, Primus has formed a truce with the inevitables, allowing them some space within Regulus and even monodrones to assist within the foundries. Rumors are starting to spread of inevitables committed to returning stranded and captured modrons to their home, although the truth of these remains to be seen, and few believe any inevitable would have such a narrow mandate.

Modron Society

Inflexible and unyielding, the modron race exists now exactly as it did countless eons ago. Obsessed with order and its own rigid hierarchy, modron society is perhaps the most convoluted in all the Multiverse.

Personality

As befitting beings bound to the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus, modrons are orderly to the extreme and find the thought of chaos incomprehensible. To them, chaos is nothing more than order too complex for mortals to understand. They are convinced that with proper study and analysis, modrons are capable of unlocking the hidden logic within chaos.

To most races, modrons come across as unemotional and frustratingly bureaucratic in all of their dealings. Also, especially given their devotion to the welfare of their race over the individual, they all seem remarkably similar in demeanor. They are not, however, pure automatons like the inevitables. Each still has a unique personality with its own collection of character traits (good, bad, and otherwise). These traits tend to be so subtle that they are often overshadowed by the immense rigidity of modron society and the fact that nearly every modron within a given caste looks identical to all others. For example, the pentadrone one deals with today might or might not be the same pentadrone dealt with yesterday—it's typically very difficult to know for certain.

Castes

Caste and hierarchy are vital to modrons. Not only does it keep their society running smoothly, it also defines their very physiology. Each caste of modron has a distinct form and set of abilities. With this comes a pre-determined set of duties within the greater modron society. Each operates according to its caste and would never conceive of it any other way.

There are two main classifications of modron among their society, the base

modrons and the hierarchs. Each of these two further divides into several castes. Base modrons are general laborers and front-line soldiers. They vastly outnumber the higher-caste modrons. The five base modrons begin with the simple monodrones, who are capable of only a single task, but who outnumber all other modrons combined. The highest of the base modrons are the pentadrones, ordered to oversee and police their fellows, always vigilant against modrons who turn against the natural order and go rogue.

The hierarch classification contains nine levels of modrons: decaton, nonaton, octon, septon, hexton, quinton, quarton, tertian, secundus. These are responsible for directing modron society and keeping the base modrons working effectively. They range from the one hundred decatons to the four mighty secundi, who rival solars and pit fiends in power.

Above them all rules Primus, the One and the Prime. Most consider him to be an intermediate deity at the very least, but outside of the modrons, no known civilization worships him. Even then, it is unclear if the unflinching servitude of the modrons can even be considered worship. Primus rises from the great Energy Pool that links all modrons and remains connected to each and every one of them through it, experiencing everything they experience.

Rogue and Exiled Modrons

The existence of the rogue modrons adds a twist to the rigid hierarchy of modron society. Sometimes commands are misinterpreted (even among the modrons), and contradictory instructions can pass through two separate chains of command to the same modron. Although exceedingly rare, this conflict can easily lead to a modron going insane, abandoning its duties, and turning rogue. Other contradictions in experience, such as on the chaotic plane of Limbo, can also cause a modron to go rogue. Even more rarely, the seeds of disobedience occur naturally within a modron, so that it grows discontent with service to the bureaucracy as a whole, even without an outside contradiction confronting it. Sages theorize that perhaps Primus himself plants these seeds in order to gain a further understanding of the universe.

Whatever the cause, rogues are hunted down and destroyed without mercy by their fellow modrons. The racial opposition they feel against rogue modrons far surpasses any they experience, even toward truly chaotic creatures such as the slaad.

Of course, modrons are the epitome of bureaucracy. Even with how reviled rogue modrons are, a rare process exists for modrons to be exiled. This occurs mostly in modrons of quadrone level and above, since they have the intellect to sometimes realize their own rogue nature and begin

Pentadrone

the petition process before they are discovered and destroyed. Tridrones and lower castes typically realize what has happened to them too late, when a squad of pentadrones arrives to destroy them.

Even among the rare few who begin the process, a very select number are approved for exile. These exiles undergo a physical transformation within the Modron Cathedral at the center of Regulus, which breaks their bond to the Energy Pool. This transforms them into a creature that resembles a quadrone, but with a few different characteristics (see the section on Rogue Modron Player Characters). Those sages who believe that Primus often plants the seeds of conflict within some modrons also theorize that Primus himself approves those modrons for exile in order for them to explore the planes unhindered by the rigidity of modron duties.

Base Modron Roles

Those who travel the planes are most likely to encounter one of the five types of base modrons. Each of these modron castes fills a specific role within modron society.

Monodrone: The monodrones are the general laborers of the modrons. Projects are ideally broken up into as many small tasks as possible, and those further subdivided until a whole battalion of monodrones can undertake very simple single tasks, which together have larger, more complex benefits for the race. Although this requires a great deal of modrons, monodrones are plentiful, comprising more than half the entire race. Nonmodrons near or within modron territory can certainly attest to this. With monodrones performing so many duties with no supervisory role, in any given location monodrones could outnumber other modrons three to one. Monodrones are notorious for performing a task until told to stop. If told to mine an area, they continue digging even long after any ore is gone and they are chipping away at the very gears of Mechanus. If ordered to fight, they often continue fighting anything, even each other if no enemy is still present, until ordered to stop. This single-minded and unceasing devotion can be frightening to behold.

Approximately one third of all monodrones are not equipped with arms, but are winged instead. These messenger monodrones carry information throughout Mechanus, Sigil, and all the planes. Since hierarch modrons can communicate telepathically over large distances within Regulus, messenger modrons are actually more common outside of Regulus than within it.

Duodrone: Although not as plentiful as monodrones, duodrones are very common. They supervise monodrones when necessary, and can perform either somewhat more complex tasks that require moderate decision-making, or perform two separate very simple tasks. This often includes an ongoing task (such as watching a location for nonmodron arrivals, or collecting a certain type of item when found), and specific short-term missions (such as constructing a building). Furthermore, duodrones are remarkably strong for their size, and are given many manual labor tasks that involve the need for greater strength than the monodrones possess.

Tridrone: Tridrones are often supervisors of duodrones and monodrones. They can handle even greater tasks and can coordinate limited resource management and decision making. Also, given their excellent climbing ability and all-around vision capability, they are commonly used as scouts and guards on the borders of Regulus. Although a massive force of spear-wielding monodrones can be intimidating, the tridrone's ability to throw numerous javelins and wield multiple weapons can make them a fighting force just as deadly and with far fewer numbers.

Quadrone: Quadrones are the archetypical modrons and, along with the overly plentiful monodrones, are the caste most commonly thought of when discussing modrons. There are two reasons for this. First, since quadrones can handle the complexity of social tasks and flexibility in its decision-making, they are the race's primary contact with nonmodrons. Secondly, given how closely quadrones work with nonmodrons, modrons who are intentionally exiled are converted to a sort of quadrone form. Standard quadrones are even more capable in battle than tridrones, and are more than a match for most human warriors. On top of their individual abilities, their coordination makes

Quadrone

them an unflinchingly organized fighting force and capable commanders of any lesser modrones.

Pentadrone: Pentadrones are the highest caste and most powerful of the base modrons. They act as the intermediaries between the hierarch and base modrons. Their combat prowess certainly outstrips any other base modron, but they are quite rare in modron armies. This is because, second to acting as intermediary to the hierarchs, pentadrones typically focus their martial abilities on other modrons. Squads of pentadrones are the primary means of hunting down and executing rogue modrons. Individuals and small groups that infiltrate Regulus to cause trouble also quickly find themselves on the receiving end of the pentadrones' paralysis gas attack.

LIVING CONSTRUCT

Originally appearing in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* (page 23), a living construct is a subtype of construct, a created being given sentience and free will through powerful and complex creation enhancements. Living constructs combine aspects of both constructs and living creatures, as detailed below.

Features: A living construct derives its Hit Dice, base attack bonus progression, saving throws, and skill points from the class it selects.

Traits: A living construct possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

—Unlike other constructs, a living construct has a Constitution score. A living construct does not gain bonus hit points by size but gains (or loses) bonus hit points through its Constitution modifier as with other living creatures.

—Unlike other constructs, a living construct does not have low-light vision or darkvision.

—Unlike other constructs, a living construct is not immune to mind-affecting effects.

—Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, and energy drain.

—A living construct cannot heal damage naturally.

—Unlike other constructs, living constructs are subject to critical hits, effects requiring a Fortitude save, death from massive damage, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, death effects, and necromancy effects.

—Living constructs can be affected by spells that target living creatures as well as by those that target constructs. Damage dealt to a living construct can be healed by a *cure light wounds* spell or a *repair light damage* spell, for example, and a living construct is vulnerable to a *harm* spell. However, spells from the healing subschool provide only half effect to a living construct.

—A living construct responds slightly differently from other living creatures when reduced to 0 hit points. A living construct that has 0 hit points is disabled, just like a living creature. He can only take a single move action or standard action in each round, but strenuous activity does not risk further injury. When his hit points are less than 0 and greater than -10, a living construct is inert. He is unconscious and helpless, and he cannot perform any actions. However, an inert living construct does not lose additional hit points unless more damage is dealt to him, as with a living creature that is stable.

—Can be raised or resurrected.

—Does not need to eat, sleep, or breathe, but can still benefit from the effects of consumable spells and magic items such as *heroes' feast* and potions.

—Does not need to sleep, but must rest for 8 hours before preparing spells.

Modron Physiology

While the other outer planar races that exemplify a specific alignment—demons, devils, celestials, slaadi, and so on—all possess the outsider type, modrons are constructs. As with so many other aspects of the modron race, sages disagree over their nature. Some say they are a version of proto-inevitable that discovered a way to bond with their Energy Pool and consequently split off and thrived as their own race. Others believe they were once "Beings of Belief" (the current vogue term among planar academics for outsiders) shaped over generations by Mechanus itself. They often cite ancient works about encounters with the modrons that depicted them more as pure geometrical objects, and not the clockwork beings witnessed now.

Regardless of their origin, modrons are constructs. Rather than powered by elemental energies like many golems or a need to enforce the laws of the universe like inevitables, modrons are given life by order itself. For at the center of Regulus, the heart of the modron hierarchy, lies the modron Energy Pool, where

Primus himself rises and all modrons (except rogues) draw power.

Modron Advancement

The effect of the Energy Pool becomes apparent when examining modron life cycles. With the destruction of a modron, including Primus himself, a modron of the next lower caste is promoted to fill that void. The modron undergoes a physical transformation that lasts one day, after which it takes on all of the characteristics of a modron of the next higher caste. The promotion of a modron of the next lower caste fills the new void, and on down through the castes. At the end of the chain, a new monodrone is birthed from the Energy Pool, completing the process.

Ondrild, a now deceased wizard who studied modrons extensively, found through complex experimentation that destroyed modrons send their life energy back to the Energy Pool, and that each advancing modron subtly draws upon the pool to power its transformation. Ondrild believed he was close to discovering how the energy transfers (even between planes) when he was found murdered and his laboratory destroyed. It was no surprise to Ondrild's students that the killers apparently destroyed the lab in a very thorough and orderly manner. None of them carried on his research in modrons after that.

Communication

A unique characteristic of base modrons is that the majority can only comprehend modrons of one caste above or below them. Monodrones, for example, believe that duodrones are the only other modrons, and that all other castes are incomprehensible beings of order, much as many mortals view powerful celestials and fiends. Consequently, a tridrone can never directly communicate with a monodrone, and a pentadrone can never give an order to a tridrone or lower.

This causes communication up and down the castes to be a long and inordinately complex process, much to the chagrin of those attempting to work with modron bureaucracy. On several occasions, formians believed this to be a critical weakness in modron defenses, but they found that with their ability to break complex activities into highly coordinated simple tasks modrons can mount a frighteningly effective defense extremely efficiently. With two simple commands of "kill all formians on sight" and "tell all lower-caste modrons these two orders," modrons appear to defend against invaders at an exponential rate. With the battle won, tridrones and above, who can handle more than two tasks, even return to their other duties with little interruption.

Furthermore, hierarch modrons within Regulus are able to communicate telepathically with any intelligent being, including any modron of any caste. This, however, can often lead to misinterpretation on the part of the lower-caste modron trying to comprehend the edicts of such an ordered being, which in turn has a chance of creating rogue modrons. Therefore, this form of communication is used rarely and with great care.

Playing a Modron Character

Although monodrones and duodrones are unsuitable as player

TONY DITERLIZZI'S MODRON MEMORIES

art provided by Tony DiTerlizzi

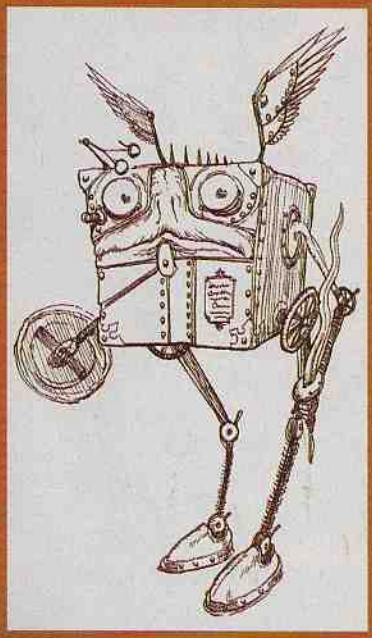
"If you've had a chance to see the PLANESCAPE books (especially the early ones from '94), you'll see something amazing that happened in RPGs: a new philosophy on how gaming booklets could be presented. It wasn't just my art—it was the awesome concepts and story hooks, and the (then) state-of-the-art graphic design and production that made these gaming supplements stand out. It was about a great group of people who were really excited about creating something new and imaginative for gamers who were tired of the usual hack-n-slash dungeon crawl. And I was honored to be a part of it.

"I did so much art back in those days. I don't own much of it anymore, I sold most of it off to my loyal fans over the years at various cons. But there are a few gems that I still treasure and have to this day, and among those are my drawings of the modrons.

"I remember designer Zeb Cook phoning me up while I was working on the campaign setting to tell me that they were toying with the idea of re-introducing the modrons via PLANESCAPE. My response was, "Those weird little circle and square guys from *Monster Manual II*?"

"He replied, "Those would be the ones," and encouraged me to revisit the concept behind them. I did, and knew right away that they HAD to be in PLANESCAPE.

continued on page 42



Rogue Modron

characters for all but the most dedicated players, tridrones and higher castes can be as playable as any other monstrous race. Exiled modrons go a step further and are particularly suited as player characters.

Although typical modrons merely carry on their labors maintaining the gears of Regulus and do not advance in class levels, exceedingly rare modrons can gain the experience necessary to advance in character classes rather than increasing castes and Hit Dice. These modrons are sent on the most dangerous missions and therefore have a rather short life expectancy. When a modron is promoted to the next caste, though, it loses all class levels.

Rogue Modron Characters

Rogue modrons free players from alignment restrictions and from having to follow the orders of the modron hierarchy. The drawback is that the rest of the modron race wants to destroy them. Very quickly after someone discovers a rogue modron,

"There was not a lot of visual exploration that I could afford to do. The deadline was very tight and we were all running dangerously late (in fact, Art Director Peggy Cooper had waived my sketch stage and had me go straight to final art! What a leap of faith!) So I took one look at the original drawings and thought: Oz. I'll make them look like they came right out of L. Frank Baum's classic Wizard of Oz books (particularly Tik-Tok, one of my favorite characters from childhood).

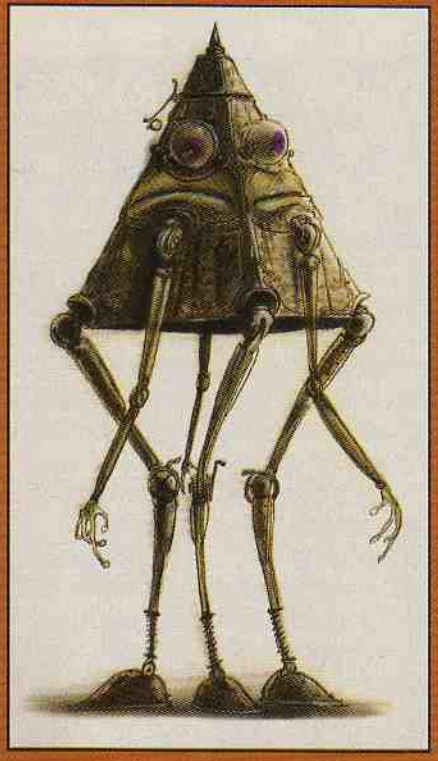
"Needless to say, Zeb and the crew up in Lake Geneva loved my designs. They used them in the campaign setting, and [modrones] frequently made appearances throughout the various game books. I remember artist Henry Higginbotham made a life-sized one for Gen Con one year. It was the coolest thing I'd ever seen (though strangely no miniatures were done).

"Anyways, I moved on from gaming to pursue my dream of creating fantastic tales for children, and did my last fully illustrated PLANESCAPE book, *The Planewalker's Handbook*, in my New York City studio in 1996. Of course, there was a modron in it.

"The rethinking of how a hackneyed or contrived character looks was a very big lesson for me. That type of thinking is what ultimately fueled the designs of the faeries, trolls, and goblins that inhabit all of *The Spiderwick Chronicles* books that I did later on with author Holly Black. And how did I meet Mrs. Black you might ask...

"Well, she came out to interview me for a magazine on my artistic contribution to gaming, particularly PLANESCAPE."

—Tony DiTerlizzi



all modrons within Regulus know this and recognize the character as rogue on sight. Pentadrones then hunt down and attempt to assassinate the character.

For campaigns set on the Material Plane, far from the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus, this becomes more viable. With the shake-ups currently happening among the modron race, few pentadrones are assigned to destroy rogue base modrons that have fled the Outer Planes.

Rogue modron personalities tend toward chaotic far more than lawful. Turning their backs on the modron race, they often seek out to prove their independence, even when it is not the wisest course of action. Rogue modrons tend to either take command or they simply ignore other authority figures. They might appear overly emotional, but close observation shows that they are mostly going through the motions in an attempt to appear more emotional than they really are. Many rogue modrons seem identical in temperament to true modrons. The subtle flaws in these rogues can only be noticed by true modrons, and when pointed out can seem to border on the absurd.

Rogue modrons can be from any caste (tridrone and higher) and can be any alignment and character class. See page 172 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on how to use specific modrons as a character race.

Exiled Modron Characters

Voluntarily exiled modrons also make fine player characters. With their bond to the modron Energy Pool broken they gain the living construct subtype, losing many of the powerful immunities of standard constructs along with their Hit Dice. Essentially, exiled modrons begin their lives again with a few faint memories of their past life. True modrons, and even many rogue modrons, view the exiles as they view any other nonmodron outsider. They are no better or worse than a human or tiefling.

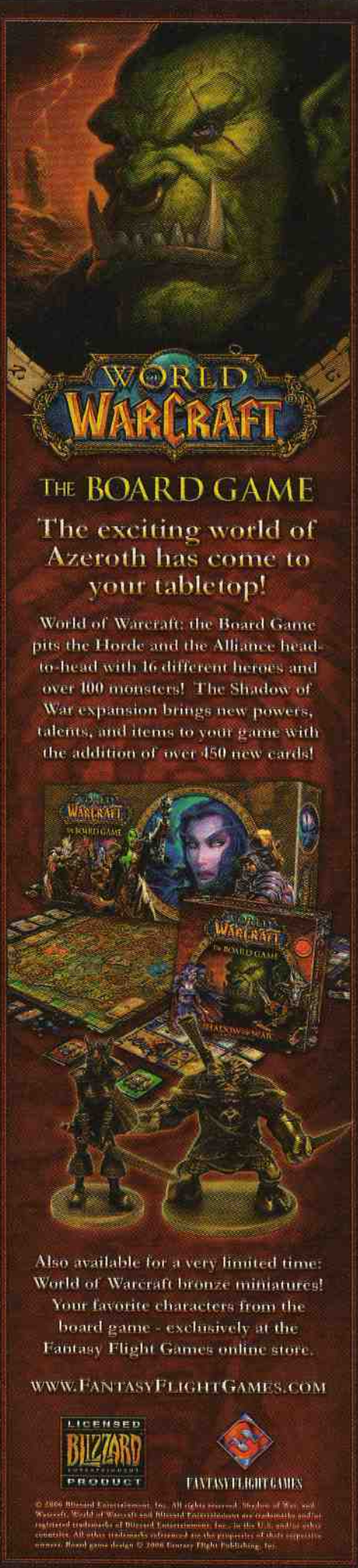
Although these characters have a range of personalities, they tend toward lawful alignment and still prefer to know the hierarchy of command within any group they join. They differ from true modrons, however, in that they can be far more flexible and adapt to various new situations without resorting to a set of standard procedures. Still being modrons, though, they often have difficulty comprehending illogical mortal ideas—like art, passion, or honor. This leads many to propose convoluted rationalizations or endless interrogations of those who demonstrate such traits.

Exiled modrons are not from any caste. They can be any alignment (although they tend toward lawfulness) and any character class. Exiled modrons are always exactly 5 1/2 feet tall and weigh 400 pounds.

Exiled Modron Racial Traits

Exiled modron characters posses the following racial traits.

- +2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, –2 Dexterity, –2 Charisma
- Medium size: As Medium creatures, exiled modrons have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Construct (living): As living constructs, exiled modrons differ from both other constructs as well as other living creatures. For details, see the "Living Construct" sidebar on page 40.
- Exiled modron base land speed is 30 feet. Exiled modrons possess vestigial wings, but lack any flight ability.
- Surprise vulnerability: Due to the conflict of free will and their innate sense of order, exiled modrons have a difficult time reacting to surprises. As such, they are considered flat-footed until the second turn in combats they did not initiate. They are still able to act on their first turn, but remain flat-footed.
- The durable shell of an exiled modrons grants acid, cold, and fire resistance 2. They also gain a +2 natural armor bonus.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- Exiled modrons retain some degree of their alien intelligence and hence receive a +2 racial bonus on all saving throws versus illusions and mind-affecting effects.
- Exiled modrons take a –2 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks made against chaotic creatures.
- Exiled modrons gain a +2 racial bonus on Spot and Listen checks.
- Exiled modrons cannot wear standard armor or clothing, including, robes, vests, and shirts. Such items have to be custom made to fit.
- Automatic languages: Common. Bonus languages: Celestial, Gnome, Infernal, and Modron.
- Favored Class: First class taken. The class that an exiled modron takes its first level in becomes its favored class.
- Level adjustment: +1.

Base Modron Statistics

Of the fourteen separate types of modrons (not including Primus), the five known as base modrons outnumber all others by thousands. The statistics for a tertian, a type of hierarch modron, appear on page 85 of *Dungeon* #144.

Modron Traits

A modron possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry).

—Resistance to acid, cold, and fire 10.

—Ever alert, all modrons have a +2 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

—**Coordinated Ally (Ex)** Modrons work exceptionally well with other lawful allies. When successfully aided on a skill check or attack roll by a lawful-aligned ally, or when aiding another lawfully aligned creature, they apply or gain a +3 bonus on their checks or attack rolls (instead of the normal +2 bonus). Furthermore, modrons gain a +4 bonus on attack rolls against an opponent flanked by a lawful-aligned ally (instead of the normal +2 bonus).

—**Fixed Initiative (Ex)** Modrons are rigid in their action, even in the most chaotic situations. As a result, a modron's initiative check is always equal to half its Hit Dice plus its Dexterity modifier or other modifiers (like Improved Initiative). When combat begins, a modron uses this number as its initiative—it never rolls an initiative check.

MONODRONE **CR 1/2**

A small spherical creature, its body covered in metal plates and dominated by a single eye, ambles toward you on clockwork legs.

Always LN Small construct (extraplanar, lawful)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Modron

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Dodge (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 natural)
hp 15 (1 HD)
Immune construct traits
Resist acid, cold, and fire resistance 10
Fort +0, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0
Weakness single task

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee shortsword +0 (1d4–1/19–20)
Melee slam +0 (1d3–1)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d6/19–20)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** –5
Special Actions focused strike 1/day

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con —, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 7
SQ coordinated ally, fixed initiative (1)
Feats Dodge
Skills Craft (any one) +1, Listen +2, Spot +2
Advancement by character class

Focused Strike (Ex) Once per day, a monodrone can take an additional standard action in a round. This action must be identical to one it just performed. For example, a monodrone could make two melee attacks against the same target or, if a monodrone were to gain spellcasting ability, it could cast the same identical spell twice in the same round targeted on the same creature or location (assuming it is capable of casting the spell more than once). It could not, however, move, make an attack, and then move again (as the moves do not immediately follow one another).

Single Task (Ex) Monodrones are only able to focus on a single task at a time. This tightened focus in combat translates to only being able to engage a single opponent in combat. Once it attacks a creature, the monodrone continues fighting the same creature until destroyed, its opponent is defeated, or it is ordered to attack another target. A monodrone cannot attack any other creatures except its target, even if they provoke attacks of opportunity.

Messenger Monodrones

Messenger monodrones have the following modifications:

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)
Melee slam +0 (1d4–1)
Special Actions focused strike 1/day, recite message

Recite Message (Ex) Messenger modrons can be dictated a message in any language up to 1 minute in length. They then carry that message until a superior (a higher caste modron or an arcane spellcaster

who summoned the monodrone as a familiar) either dictates a new one or orders the current message forgotten. Monodrones do not understand messages not in the modron language but can still recite them exactly, regardless of language. Monodrones cannot be used to cast spells in this manner, even those with only verbal components.

Strategies and Tactics

Individually, monodrones are not very effective in combat. When encountering any form of aggression, even verbal, they flee and report to other modrons in the vicinity unless they outnumber their opponents by at least three to one.

In sufficient numbers, however, monodrones can be devastating. Even with their low intelligence, they still naturally coordinate their attacks, surrounding those who appear to be the greatest threats first and concentrating their attacks. If ordered to attack by a superior, they fight to the death without wavering.

Messenger monodrones never fight unless they face no other option or are ordered to fight.

DUODRONE **CR 1**

This awkward blocky creature is roughly humanoid shape, ambling on a pair of thin mechanical legs. Two rectangular segments make up its form. A face on the upper one studies you closely.

Always LN Small construct (extraplanar, lawful)
Init –1; **Senses** low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Modron

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+1 size, –1 Dex, +5 natural)
hp 21 (2 HD)
Immune construct traits
Resist acid, cold, and fire resistance 10
Fort +0, **Ref** –1, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk spear +4 (1d8+4/×3)
Ranged mwk spear –1 (1d8+3/×3)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1
Special Actions surge of strength
Abilities Str 16, Dex 9, Con —, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ coordinated ally, fixed initiative (0)
Feats Monkey Grip*
Skills Craft (any one) +1, Listen +3, Spot +3
Advancement by character class
*From *Complete Warrior*, can use a weapon one size larger than its size with no extra effort.

Surge of Strength (Ex) As a swift action once per day, a duodrone can gain a +4 bonus to its Strength. This bonus lasts until the duodrone's next turn.

Strategies and Tactics

Duodrones are not afraid of combat and fight to defend themselves even without orders. If vastly outnumbered, one usually leaves to warn others while the rest stand and fight, even as a delaying tactic. They have no fear of death since they are dimly aware that they will return to the Energy Pool and be reborn.

As with all modrons, duodrones naturally coordinate their attacks but are more apt to split up and attempt to weaken as many foes as possible. They often start off with their surge of strength in order to make themselves appear even stronger than they already are in hopes of either finishing their opponent quickly or scaring them off.

TRIDRONE **CR 3**

A bizarre pyramid-shaped creature stands before you. Each of its three sides sports a single eye, mouth, and javelin-wielding arm, and the creature constantly rotates to view you with a different eye. Although seemingly made of flesh underneath, it is covered in metal plates and its limbs appear more clockwork than natural.

Always LN Medium construct (extraplanar, lawful)
Init +1; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +10
Languages Common, Modron

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)
hp 36 (3 HD)
Immune construct traits
Resist acid, cold, and fire resistance 10
Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (4 squares), climb 30 ft.
Melee 3 mwk shortspear +3 (1d6+2)
Ranged 3 mwk shortspear +2 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con —, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ coordinated ally, fixed initiative (2)
Feats Combat Reflexes, Multiweapon Fighting
Skills Listen +3, Search +8, Spot +10, Survival +5
Advancement by character class

All-Around Vision (Ex) The sensory organs on all sides of a tridrone allow it to look in any direction, bestowing a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks. Opponents gain no flanking bonuses when attacking a tridrone.

Strategies and Tactics

Tridrones focus on movement and using the terrain to tactical advantage. In caverns and inside buildings, they often climb the walls and drop down upon their enemies. Furthermore, they typically begin combat by throwing their javelins and then charging into melee.

Since they spend much of their time exploring or working on the edges of Mechanus's gears, tridrones tend to be more solitary than the other modrons. Due to this, they are more apt to fight as individuals rather than as a coordinated whole. Given their preference for continually darting about during combat and their near identical appearance, a group of attacking tridrones can be very difficult to fight effectively.

QUADRONE **CR 4**

A creature the size of a human with a cube-shaped body marches nearby. Eyes on every side of the cube watch you as it passes. With its four arms, it carries two bows, one warily aimed toward you and the other scanning back and forth on the opposite side.

Always LN Medium construct (extraplanar, lawful)
Init +4; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, darkvision 60 ft., Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Common, Modron
AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)
hp 47 (5 HD)
Immune construct traits
Resist acid, cold, and fire resistance 10
Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3
Speed 30 ft. (4 squares)
Melee 2 mwk longsword +5 (1d8+3)
Ranged 2 mwk longbows +7 (1d8/×3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5
Abilities Str 16, Dex 18, Con —, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 12
SQ coordinated ally, fixed initiative (6), modron leader, repetitive attack
Feats Multiweapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longbow)
Skills Craft (any one) +6, Diplomacy +2, Knowledge (any two) +6, Listen +12, Sense Motive +11, Spot +12
Advancement by character class
All-Around Vision (Ex) The sensory organs on all sides of a quadrone allow it to look in any direction, bestowing a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks. Opponents gain no flanking bonuses when attacking a quadrone.
Modron Leader (Ex) Quadrones are capable of giving orders to any modron of a lesser caste.
Repetitive Attack (Ex) If a quadrone makes a full-attack action against the same target on consecutive turns, it gain a +2 bonus on its attack rolls. Changing targets or performing any other action causes the quadrone to lose this bonus.

Winged Quadrones

Winged quadrones have the following modifications:
Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)
Ranged mwk longbow +9 (1d8/×3)
Feats Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Strategies and Tactics

Quadrones are the lowest caste to have significant intelligence and the capability to strategize and plan. With this, they can be incredibly effective, balancing ranged attacks with their two longbows against deadly assaults with their short swords.

In groups of mixed castes, they are well aware of the capabilities of lesser castes and order them to attack according to their particular strengths. Furthermore, given that they interact with outsiders more than the other castes, quadrones are often aware of the strengths and weaknesses of other races and, being neither good nor evil, don't hesitate to use every advantage possible to crush their opponents. They fight furiously not out of brutality or a desire for glory, but from pure efficiency. Orders must be obeyed, buildings must be constructed, and enemies must be defeated. This structure is implicit in a quadrone's understanding of these concepts.

PENTADRONE CR 5

Like a clockwork starfish on rickety, but apparently strong legs, the creature strolls forward. A single eye sits on each appendage and a small tube on the top of the creature slowly and subtly angles toward you. Glancing in every direction, the creature regards you carefully.

Always LN Medium construct (extraplanar, lawful)
Init +2; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +16
Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron
AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +9 natural)
hp 53 (6 HD)
Immune construct traits
Resist acid, cold, and fire resistance 20
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6
Speed 30 ft. (4 squares)
Melee slam +10 (2d6+9)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +10
Attack Options paralysis gas
Abilities Str 22, Dex 12, Con —, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 16
SQ coordinated ally, fixed initiative, levitation gas
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Track
Skills Gather Information +4, Hide +11, Knowledge (any one) +9, Listen +12, Search +11, Spot +16, Survival +11, Tumble +8
Advancement by character class
All-Around Vision (Ex) The sensory organs on all sides of a pentadrone allow it to look in any direction, bestowing a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks. Opponents gain no flanking bonuses when attacking a pentadrone.
Paralysis Gas (Su) Pentadrones can emit a 30-foot line of paralysis gas. Creatures caught within the area must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 2d4 rounds. The DC is Charisma-based. After a pentadrone uses its gas emitter to spray paralysis gas, it cannot use it again for levitation or paralysis gas for 5 rounds.
Levitation Gas (Su) Pentadrones possess a gas emitter that, when aimed downward, allows them to float as per a *levitate* spell cast by a 5th level wizard. After a pentadrone levitates in this manner, it cannot use its gas emitter to levitate or spray paralysis gas for 5 rounds.

Strategies and Tactics

As the most advanced of the base modrons, pentadrones have a complex set of responsibilities. They must interpret and pass down orders from the hierarchs to the hundreds of thousands of quadrones (and then onto the millions of other lesser modrons), and they must hunt down and destroy their own kind when they turn rogue. To manage these duties, pentadrones are introspective and deeply analytical. They attempt to study every obstacle carefully for all possible solutions, whether faced with a river with no bridge or being severely outnumbered by a pack of demons looking for a plaything.

Once they decide on a plan, they immediately launch their assault. The dramatic shift from quiet observation to sudden attack can be quite effective in catching opponents off guard. Unlike the monodrones and duodrones and to a lesser extent the tridrones and quadrones, pentadrones constantly re-evaluate their plans and are capable of abandoning a plan already in action to pursue

MODRON LORE

Characters with bardic knowledge or ranks in Knowledge (the planes) can learn more about modrons. As there are numerous different kinds of modrons, add the listed modifer to the CR of the modron you're seeking information about to determine the check's DC.

Knowledge (the Planes)

DC	Result
10 +CR	You can identify the creature you're facing as a modron, a construct native to the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus. This result reveals all construct traits.
15 + CR	Modrons are strictly hierarchical and literal creatures, highly organized, but inflexible. This result reveals the caste of the modron before you and its role within the modron hierarchy.
20 +CR	Every few hundred years an army of modrons leaves thier home city, Regulus, to traverse the planes in an event called the Great Modron March. You know one or two special abilities of the modron before you.
25 + CR	Events of irreconcilable chaos or obvious breakdowns of their racial bureaucracy cause some modrons to leave Mechanus and venture off on their own. This result reveals if a modron is a true modron, a rogue modron, or an exile.
30 + CR	The leader of the modrons is a godlike being called Primus. This result allows you to identify any of the nine castes of hierarch modrons.

another. Again, these shifts are typically dramatic and sudden.

Knowing their importance among the base modrons, pentadrones have a stronger survival instinct than other modrons and withdraw from fights to save themselves. As with so many aspects of modron life, this can easily be interpreted as an emotional act, but in reality, it is merely the most logical course of action in many circumstances. If the situation dictates that staying in the fight, even at the cost of its own life, would have the greatest outcome for other modrons, then a pentadrone fights with as much determination as the single-minded monodrone. They fully understand the significance of the Energy Pool and know that the destruction of their current form is only temporary.

Encounters with Base Modrons

Within Regulus, modrons are seen everywhere. Outside of that realm, however, they are extremely rare but typically travel in squads, legions, or massive marches.

Messenger (EL 1): Messenger monodrones are used frequently to communicate with modrons traveling throughout the planes, especially the Material Plane. They also are quite useful as familiars.

A messenger monodrone carries a message from its wizard master to his arcanist guild. The message concerns a number of devils who appear to be constructing a planar portal to open into the arcanist guild tower with the assistance of someone within the guild. The monodrone is captured, though, by another young and brash sorcerer in a misguided attempt to "train" it to be his familiar.

Serial Killer (EL 5): Many modrons tainted by Tenebrous have willingly accepted the evil he left within them, and have turned their orderly minds toward heinous acts.

A tridrone among those infected by Tenebrous has fully embraced its new evil yearnings. It has traveled to the Material Plane and roams the dark alleys of a major city, brutally killing the weak and forgotten. Since the killer solely strikes at the poor and neglected, the City Watch only makes half-hearted attempts at investigation. Coupled with the fact that the tridrone thoroughly plans each attack, the Watch has not been able to do anything to curtail the murders. The homeless and poor call the tridrone Maniel the Silent Death, after a villain of local folklore. The tridrone has been perfecting its killing abilities for months and has gained three levels of ranger with a favored enemy of humans.

Rogue Hunters (EL 9): Modrons often travel in small groups to hunt down and destroy modrons that have turned rogue.

A pack of modrons led by a pentadrone are hunting down a rogue modron. The hunting party consists of one pentadrone, four quadrones, two tridrones, and two duodrones. The rogue quadrone, who has taken the name Cubelian the Bright, has turned to the path of goodness and devoted himself to Pelor. He stands little chance against the pack of modrons and desperately flees for his life.

Base Modron Ecology

Monodrones are genderless and spawn directly from the great modron Energy Pool. Modrons of all other castes are promoted from a lower caste and undergo a physical and mental change to match the new caste. They lose all abilities and class levels and appear as an ordinary member of their new caste. All modrons draw power to survive and for their transformations between castes from the Energy Pool within Regulus.

Environment: Modrons live on the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus largely within the realm of Regulus. Outside of Regulus, they can be found wherever their mission leads them and favor no particular environments. Tridrones and pentadrones are more suited for treacherous

terrain and harsh conditions than the other castes and therefore are more prevalent in those areas than the other castes are.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Modrons look like a cross between clockwork creatures and living flesh. Their bodies are shaped like geometric objects with spindly arms and legs. They have no visible noses or ears, but can smell and hear normally through other small orifices hidden on their various faces.

Monodrones are spheres with a single eye and mouth. Messenger monodrones have small mechanical wings in place of arms. Monodrones stand 2 feet tall and weigh 40 pounds.

Duodrones are flat and rectangular in shape, with a single rather normal face with a pair of eyes. They also possess small wings, and are 3 feet tall and weigh 120 pounds.

Tridrones are shaped like inverted pyramids, with a flat triangular top and spindly appendages sprouting below. In addition, on each of the other three faces of the pyramid, the tridrone has a single eye and mouth. Tridrones are 4 feet tall and weigh 350 pounds.

Quadrones are cubes with only two legs and either four arms or two arms and two wings. They have a pair of eyes and a mouth on every face of the cube—even the base and top. Quadrones' cubical bodies are 6 feet tall and their large blockish forms weigh 500 pounds.

Pentadrones are shaped like a five-pointed starfish, with thick appendages drooping down from a central high point. Each appendage possesses a single eye and mouth. In the center of the appendages stand five legs and a spherical gas emitter. They lack any arms but are able to use their appendages for grasping objects as necessary. Pentadrones stand just over 7 feet tall and weigh 500 pounds.

Alignment: True modrons are logic and order incarnate and therefore are all lawful neutral. Any that deviate from this are exiles or rogue modrons, the latter of which are hunted and destroyed.

Typical Treasure

Modrons rarely carry coins or goods. Outside Regulus, modrons are equipped with the standard level of items. Within Regulus, modrons only carry what items are necessary for their duty. Consequently, unless specifically placed on guard duty or hunting for rogue modrons, a modron is not armed.

Modrons with Class Levels

True and rogue modrons have no favored class. All multiclassing between standard classes causes an experience penalty. Rogue modron clerics still tend toward lawful deities, but shifted toward either good or evil. Rogue modrons are wary of lawful neutral deities who might feel obligated to turn the rogues over to Primus.

Tridrone level adjustment: +3.
Quadrone level adjustment: +4.
Pentadrone level adjustment: +5.

For Player Characters

All base modrons can work as summoned monsters, while monodrones might appeal to PCs as familiars.

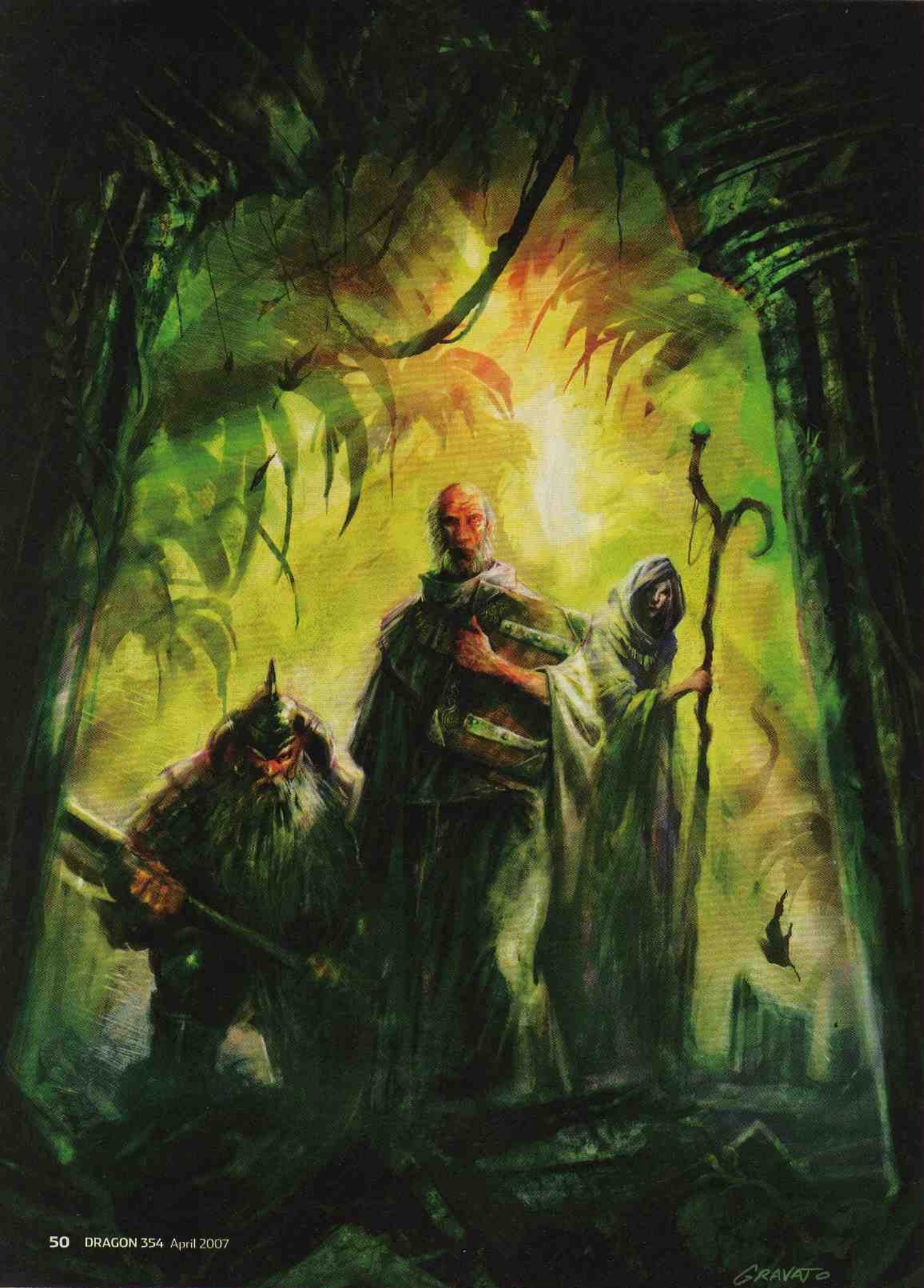
Summoning Modrons

As a lawful-aligned spell, spellcasters can summon modrons using the following *summon monster* spells.

Modron	Summon Monster level
Monodrone	1st level list
Duodrone	2nd level list
Tridrone	3rd level list
Quadrone	4th level list
Pentadrone	5th level list

Monodrones as Familiars

A monodrone familiar can be summoned using the Improved Familiar feat (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 200). An arcane spellcaster must be lawful-aligned and at least 5th level to acquire a monodrone familiar.


GRAVATO

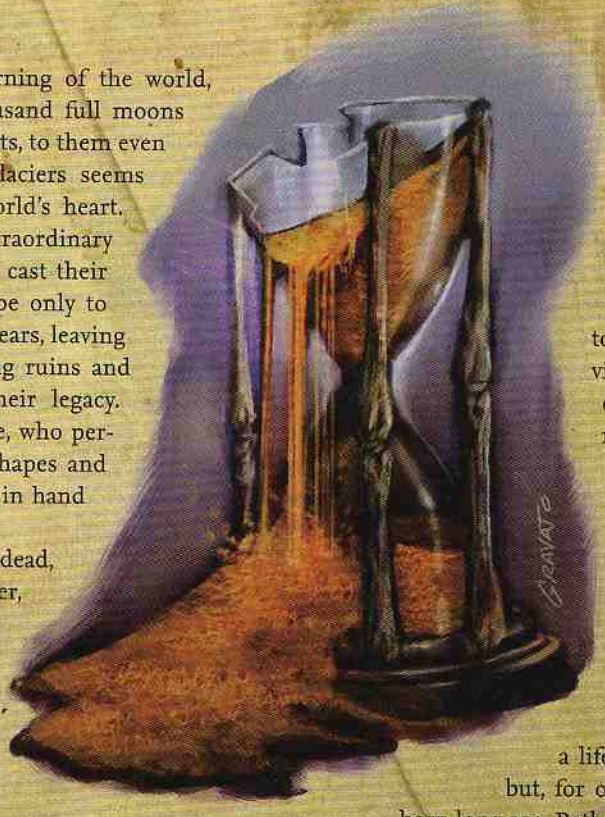
ANCIENT PCS

Playing Elders in D&D

by Hal Maclean • illustrated by John Gravato

Call them the Elder.

Born in the morning of the world, witnesses to a thousand full moons and countless sunsets, to them even the ebb and flow of the glaciers seems but a single beat of the world's heart. Within the span of their extraordinary lifetimes empires rise up to cast their shadows across the landscape only to yield beneath the weight of years, leaving nothing but a few crumbling ruins and the whisper of myth as their legacy. The Elder, those who endure, who persevere as the grist of ages shapes and molds the world, walk hand in hand with history.



Whether free-willed undead, eternal elf, long-lived monster, or something even more bizarre, playing an Elder character demands special consideration. This article offers you the tools you need to create such an Elder, a character old beyond ages.

YOU'RE HOW OLD?

Exactly what constitutes an Elder character depends a great deal upon the life expectancy of your campaign world's typical inhabitants. Elder characters possess a special perspective, the detachment that comes from watching many generations of shorter-lived folk take their moment in the sun only to wither and fade away. Seeing these ephemerals forge great empires and towering monuments to their glory only to disappear, swallowed by the ages, leaves Elders uniquely conscious of the impermanence of all things—even the deities themselves. A human, with a maximum age of about a hundred years, would likely consider the mists of history quite a bit closer to the present day then an elf, capable of living well into her eighth century.

AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

Although the rules presented in this article focus on those who have lived for a thousand years or more, many of the concepts are applicable to any character who has survived beyond the normal life expectancy of her race. You must, however, first work out how your character managed to achieve her status as an Elder character by selecting between two broad choices.

STRANGER IN STRANGE LAND

Your character possesses a life span typical for her race, but, for one reason or another, was born long ago. Rather than while away the ages between the time of her birth and the present day she somehow managed to skip over the intervening centuries. The method by which your character found her way into future could serve as interesting fodder for campaign and plot development. Consider the three possibilities outlined below.

Catapulted Forward: Something, an explosion in the lab, a botched sacrificial rite, or perhaps breaking a magical bottle filled with the raw essence of time, cast your character out of her normal era and propelled her into the distant future. This works particularly well if other creatures arrived with her—perhaps personal enemies, vulnerable dependents, or villains with truly sinister plans for this new era.

Frozen in Time: Your character ran afoul of something that removed her from the normal passage of time

THE ENDLESS

DMs who favor consistency in their campaigns might find this discussion a little vague. One simple way to bring clarity to things comes from creating a new special quality, endless, and assigning it to those creatures you consider particularly long-lived in your campaign. Depending upon the nature of the creature and your intent as the DM, this special quality could apply to every member of the species, a select group of elders or perhaps only those who found some way to cheat death. Remember, this special quality does not grant immortality, rather it gives those enjoying it the ability to "live until killed," still leaving them vulnerable to attack, the rigors of disease, and accidents.

Endless (Ex): A creature with this special quality ceases to age once it achieves a certain point in its life cycle, most often sometime after reaching adulthood but prior to its equivalent of middle age. These creatures exist in a special kind of physiological stasis, counteracting all the consequences of advancing years that usually lead to frailty and eventually death. While they must still perform all the necessary sustaining actions (eating, sleeping, breathing, and so on) normally demanded of their type, they never suffer from any sort of physical deterioration or consequent reduction in Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Lacking this special insight into their own mortality, and the incentive to find new, less taxing ways to deal with challenges, they also never gain any improvements to their Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma due to advancing age.

without killing her. Be it an encounter with a basilisk, a *temporal stasis* spell, or a *mirror of life trapping*—from her perspective countless centuries passed in but an instant, leaving her forever exiled from her own era. This approach often leaves your character in the debt of whomever freed her, perhaps burdening her with many complications as the campaign progresses.

Parasite: Somehow, the most important elements of your character—her personality, her soul—were preserved in an object or place until one day a person from the present era inadvertently set her free, becoming in the process her host. If your character had no control over whether to possess her host, maybe herself the victim of a botched curse, she could face the world with her hands relatively clean. The guilt of stealing someone else's body, however, and perhaps the need to conceal her true identity from her host's friends and family, could serve as an interesting challenge.

CHEATING THE REAPER

Your character, somehow, in the distant past, found a way to embrace immortality without altering her fundamental nature. Rather then become undead, she simply endured, the years mingling into decades and the decades into centuries. This approach gives you the advantage of beginning play fully integrated into the present-day campaign.

The easiest way to achieve this comes from giving your character the endless special quality (see sidebar).

PRIMORDIAL MONSTERS

Resources like the *Monster Manual* explicitly give a staggering life span to only a handful of creatures. For instance, the eldritch giant found in *Monster Manual III* can live up to 3,000 years, while dragons reaching the cusp of a millenium find themselves merely ancient, with the wyrm and great wyrm age categories yet to come. Despite this seeming scarcity, the rules suggest a number of other likely candidates.

To create an ageless, monstrous character begin with intelligent, free-willed creatures lacking a Constitution score. Most notably drawn from the ranks of the undead this also includes a handful of sentient constructs such as the dreadguard and the nimblewright from *Monster Manual II*. Creatures like these find the weight of ages less onerous than most other beings, weathering the grinding of the centuries like a mountain resists the wind and rain.

Since the rules present many undead as templates, they prove particularly adaptable as ancient characters, allowing you to create a centuries-old lich, an antediluvian vampire rogue, or a fighter who long ago became a death knight. Most of these templates impose a hefty level adjustment, however, and usually also demand an evil alignment, so they sometimes prove problematic. One fairly simple solution to this problem involves using the *awaken undead* spell as detailed in *Libris Mortis*, or perhaps a more powerful version permitting a wider range of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores for its recipients. This spell should allow you to create a free-willed zombie or skeleton of any alignment, probably with a level adjustment of only +1.

Next, consider those creatures who seem likely to view the passage of time as irrelevant or at worst a nuisance. While technically this includes most outsiders and elementals—ageless, eternal representatives of forces that transcend mortal frailties—their status as residents of planes far removed from the Material Plane generally make them unsuitable. Your best bet comes from the handful of outsiders with the native subtype, like janni, or creatures augmented with the shade template, who could conceivably spend countless centuries watching mortals scurry about.

Any number of creatures firmly connected with nature, and the restless energy of the Material Plane, might find the notion of a life span measured in mere centuries ridiculous. Treants, for instance, likely enjoy a longevity to outlast many generations of elves. Some fey—those connected to natural phenomena less fleeting than even

EXPERIENCE NECESSARY?

Many DMs and players prefer to begin with 1st-level characters, relishing the challenge of slowly, over the course of an entire campaign, advancing them to the heights of power and glory. When considering an Elder character with hundreds—if not thousands—of years of living prior to the start of the campaign, this seems nearly impossible. Especially since few, if any, of those creatures able to achieve that kind of life span possess the sorts of powers and Hit Dice suitable for 1st-level characters.

Monster classes (such as those in *Savage Species*) and the application of similar rules to templates offers a solution to this problem. Such progressions make it possible to generate even very powerful creatures as 1st-level characters, requiring them to earn their more formidable abilities as they advance in levels. If you find it difficult to accept the notion of someone living fifty human generations without mastering any adventuring skills consider some of the possible explanations outlined below. All assume that your character at one time enjoyed greater power and somehow lost it.

Atrophied: Your character stopped using many of her abilities long ago and slowly, over time, they faded away. Now, after decades of decline and decay, she must start all over again, struggling to relearn what once came so naturally to her.

Cast Down: Perhaps due to bad luck, the machinations of an enemy, or divine retribution, your character was stripped of most of her abilities, forcing her to begin anew. This works particularly well when used with traditionally evil creatures who recently chose to serve the cause of good.

Reborn: Your character found herself on the brink of death or a similar catastrophe and discovered only one solution: a form of reincarnation. Although she remembers the details of her old life she must learn how to use her abilities all over again.

Severed: While it made sense at the time, your character decided long ago to link most of her abilities to an object or place, leaving her with a fatal Achilles heel. Now she must pay the consequences. Driven away from her stronghold, her object of power destroyed or stolen, she must find new sources of energy and strive for her revenge.

trees—such as nymphs or sylphs, might measure their lives in terms of eons rather then years.

Finally, consider the many creatures who, due to their reputation or role in folklore, seem ideal candidates for extended lifetimes. Any number of sinister creatures, including aboleths, cloakers, and nagas could, thanks to their innate biology or some pact with the forces of darkness, rack up countless centuries of life. On the other hand, if you prefer creatures that more closely mirror humans, making it easier for them to exist in a typical campaign world, consider basing your character upon creatures like hags, rakshasa, or pure blood yuan-ti. Each of these could easily live through a thousand summers in a typical campaign world.

SHADES OF THE ELDER

The hammer of history shapes everyone to a greater or lesser degree. A person born into a time of strife and deprivation presents a profoundly different face to the world than one who came to adulthood carefree and comfortable. Each person is like an unbroken chain, its links forged by events, meeting the future profoundly influenced by these earlier experiences. Even those with the memories of a millenium behind them still find themselves trapped within the steel web of their own past.

Each of the ancient backgrounds outlined here allows you to create an character with a worldview uniquely affected by her past. Some assume she spent her formative years learning the lore of vanished civilizations or worshiping lost deities. Others draw upon the sum total of her experiences over the centuries, mastering esoteric skills, building a legendary reputation or perhaps simply developing a ferocious will to live. All of them require her to take the Wedded to History feat in order to gain any of the benefits of the background.

APOSTLE OF THE FORGOTTEN

The temples lie in ruin, the idols nothing but dust. Where once a thousand voices cried out in adoration now only one remains to drive back the silence. Your character began her life as a devotee of a mighty deity who has since almost completely disappeared from the mortal realm. The last servant of a forgotten or perhaps dying entity, she works tirelessly to bring about its return despite her secret fear that the world has moved on.

Effect: A tiny fragment, the merest sliver, of your immortal patron maintains a tenuous connection to the world through you, sometimes granting a special insight into the nature of time and space. Once per day, as a swift action, you may discover the consequences of an action prior to carrying it out, giving you the option of trying something else instead. This effect duplicates the spell *augury*, but it can only see 1 minute into the future. Your caster level for this effect is equal to your character level. In addition, your insight grants you a +1 bonus on initiative checks.

ELDER OF LEGEND

Slipping effortlessly through history, molding events to her liking, making and breaking nations, your character enjoys a singular reputation as a historical figure. Although much of your character's power and influence has waned over the years, the name still commands respect. Inspiring some with feelings of radiant awe and others with shivers of almost supernatural dread, her ability to influence those familiar with her past deeds serves as one of her most potent assets.

TIMELESS MAGIC

Scholars tell us that in bygone eras mortals actually found a way to sidestep the doom decreed by the deities. A handful of the mightiest of magic workers discovered a secret loophole in the law of death, allowing them to endow those they cared about with a form of immortality, albeit with a potentially fatal vulnerability. Unfortunately, since they could not grant this boon to themselves directly, and distrusted their colleagues, all of these geniuses eventually passed into the next life, taking their fantastic secret with them.

KISSED BY THE AGES

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, F, XP
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: Any living creature other then yourself
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You create a magical connection between a living creature and a small magic item like a ring, pendant, or similar trinket with a market price of at least 4,000 gp. This forever eliminates any of the item's existing magical properties and causes it to radiate a strong aura of necromancy. The recipient of the spell may draw upon the strange, inanimate resilience of this object, gaining the endless special quality so long as she wears it (which occupies an item slot on the body). If she loses or otherwise removes this object, however, she begins to age again at the rate normal for her race and in addition suffers a –1 penalty upon all saving throws. Against death effects she instead suffers a –2 penalty. These penalties remain in effect until she once again carries the object on her person. The connection she enjoys with this object makes it all but impossible to destroy while she lives, requiring the intervention of a deity, contact with an artifact, or similarly unusual circumstances to smash it. Due to her special connection with it, the recipient of the spell always knows the approximate location of her object so long as both are on the same plane.

Focus: Magic item with a market price of at least 4,000 gp.
XP Cost: 5,000 XP.

Effect: Whenever you make a Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check against a target who knows your true identity you may add +3 to the roll. Having this fame, however, comes with a price. Those who know of your past often call upon you to aid their cause or side with them in conflicts.

GOLDEN AGER

Born in a time of glory, of unimaginable wonder, your character mourns for all that was lost and pities those who never tasted the paradise she once called home. She began her life as a resident of a legendary civilization, enjoying an education into the fundamental nature of magic and reality that would bring tears of envy to the most learned of today's scholars. Somehow, when disaster claimed her homeland, she managed to survive, although sometimes, in her loneliness, she almost wishes her bones rested alongside those of her long vanished peers.

Effect: You possess a startling grasp of magical theory, permitting you to work wonders that dazzle and amaze those born in the present day. You may always treat Use Magic Device as a class skill and use it even if untrained. Further, you only risk a mishap when activating blindly if you fail your check by 15 or more (instead of 10 or more).

WEDDED TO HISTORY [GENERAL]

Born in the distant past, you enjoy a special insight or possess uncanny abilities that distinguish you from those for whom the time of your birth is at best nothing but a few memories passed down through countless generations.

Prerequisite: You can only take this feat at 1st level.

Effect: You may choose one of the ancient backgrounds described in this article, gaining any special abilities that accompany it.

HAND OF PROPHECY

Blessed—or maybe cursed—by the arbiters of destiny, your character grapples, often blindly, to ensure the fulfillment of a particular prophecy. Despite her longevity, her ages of diligent service, she greets each sunrise knowing that it might be her last, discarded by her unseen masters, her obscure purpose finally fulfilled. Sometimes, in moments of weariness, when she realizes how little of the world of her childhood remains, she cries out in frustration and considers simply letting the burden fall from her shoulders. She soon discovers that even that momentary rebellion served the greater plan, however, leading her to an inevitable destiny—and perhaps doom.

Effect: Despite your ignorance of your full roll in the prophecy, you still possess the innate ability to sense those tasked with thwarting you. Once per day, you may designate one creature you face in combat as your rival and opposite. You receive a +2 bonus on attack rolls and opposed skill checks when facing that creature.

SURVIVOR

One by one your character's contemporaries fell to the wayside; too slow, too weak, unfit to endure the endless grind of years. Everything she knew, everyone she loved, vanished into history, forgotten. Now

only she remains, her extraordinary will to exist pushing her forward through even the most unimaginable torment and trauma.

Effect: You may draw upon your ferocious, savage tenacity to sustain yourself in times of crisis, although this leaves you feeling drained and dispirited afterward. You may, when making a Fortitude or a Reflex saving throw, choose to use your Will save instead. However, this imposes a cumulative –1 penalty on all subsequent Will saving throws for the day.

THROWBACK

While your character might resemble a typical member of her race, she enjoys a perspective and physiology quite different from that of her modern counterparts. Atavistic, the final holdover from an earlier stage of evolution, she sometimes draws upon resources, both physical and mental, that set her apart. Despite her origins she generally considers herself fully integrated into the present era, making full use of equipment and magic available to her without any hesitation or fear. Note, this background only applies to the living and is unavailable to undead and similar creatures.

Effect: Your status as a precursor of the modern version of your race sometimes presents a momentary quirk of your physiology or psychic makeup that foils attacks designed to harm members of your race. You are not subject to attacks or effects geared specifically to creatures of your type. This includes such things as a ranger's favored enemy bonuses, the extra damage from bane weapons, and spell effects geared to one specific creature type (for instance, *charm person*, since it only affects humanoids).

WANDERER

Jaded, unflappable, in the course of your character's extraordinary span of years she has encountered everything at least once. Nothing surprises her anymore, and due to decades of dabbling she possesses a startling array of talents and skills, including a facility for the rudiments of virtually any language. Witness of wonders to stir the heart and horrors to shock the ages, her resourcefulness borders upon the mythical.

Effect: You may attempt to use any trained-only skill even if you have no skill ranks in it, although you take a –2 penalty on the check. Further, you may try to communicate in any known language, requiring a successful DC 15 Intelligence check to get your meaning across.

ANCIENT FEATS

The following feats grant your Elder an even stronger tie to his past and abilities that come from enduring countless ages.

ANCESTOR [GENERAL]

All members of your race consider you a distant, but revered, relative.

Prerequisites: Wedded to History, elder of legend background.

Effect: Shift the initial attitude of anyone of your race one step closer to helpful. In addition, you receive a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks to further shift the attitudes of anyone of your race.

MASTER'S VOICE [GENERAL]

The tutelage of your long-vanished homeland allows you to mimic the magical aura of others, including the creators of certain magical creatures.

Prerequisites: Use Magic Device 9 ranks, Wedded to History, golden ager background.

Effect: You may, as a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity, attempt to impersonate the master or creator of a non-intelligent creature of the undead or construct type. This requires you to make a Use Magic Device check (DC 20 + HD of creature). If you succeed in tricking the creature you may then, as a standard action, command it to perform any task it is normally capable of performing so long as you succeed in another Use Magic Device check (DC = 10 + HD of creature). You must make this check each round in which it performs the commanded action, and if you should ever fail a check you must reestablish your false persona prior to issuing a new command.

Special: The creature always recognizes its true master, making it impossible for you to control it when in his presence.

PACKRAT [GENERAL]

Your incessant combing of marketplaces and bazaars sometimes leaves even you surprised by the contents of your backpack.

Prerequisites: Appraise 1 rank, Wedded to history, wanderer background.

Effect: You may carry up to a maximum of 10 gp/level worth of items without recording their exact nature. This allows you to—assuming you retain access to your gear—subsequently designate all or part of this amount to immediately add a desired item to your equipment list. You must spend 8 hours shopping in a town to replenish this gear.

Special: You must record an amount of weight occupied by this gear at the time of purchase and adjust your encumbrance accordingly. You may not add an item to your equipment list if its weight exceeds the amount you allocated for this purpose.

PAWN IN THE GREAT GAME [GENERAL]

You are a mere plaything to cosmic powers that might never permit you the release of death, although they take a toll in pain and suffering when you fail them.

Prerequisites: Diehard, Endurance, Wedded to History, hand of prophecy background.

Effect: Whenever you fall prey to an attack that reduces you from positive hit points to –10 or fewer, or you fail a saving throw to resist a death attack, make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 25 – your level). If you succeed, you take 2 points of Strength and Constitution drain, but find yourself alive with 1 hit point.

SELF-MEDICATING [GENERAL]

Only completely trusting yourself, you learned how to tend to your own wounds and aliments.

Prerequisites: Wedded to History, survivor background.

Effect: You treat Heal as a class skill and can give yourself long-term care. Further, once each day you may heal 1d4 + your Intelligence modifier points of damage (miniumum 1) by stitching up wounds and applying various alchemical unguents. Performing this healing requires 1 minute of uninterrupted work and a healing kit (using up one use of the kit).

SHUFFLED INTERIOR [GENERAL]

All your vital organs—heart, lungs, liver—are slightly off center, making it difficult for your enemies to accurately aim their most deadly attacks.

Prerequisites: Great Fortitude, Wedded to History, throwback background.

Effect: When a critical hit or sneak attack is scored against you, there is a 25% chance that the critical hit or sneak attack is negated and the damage is rolled normally.

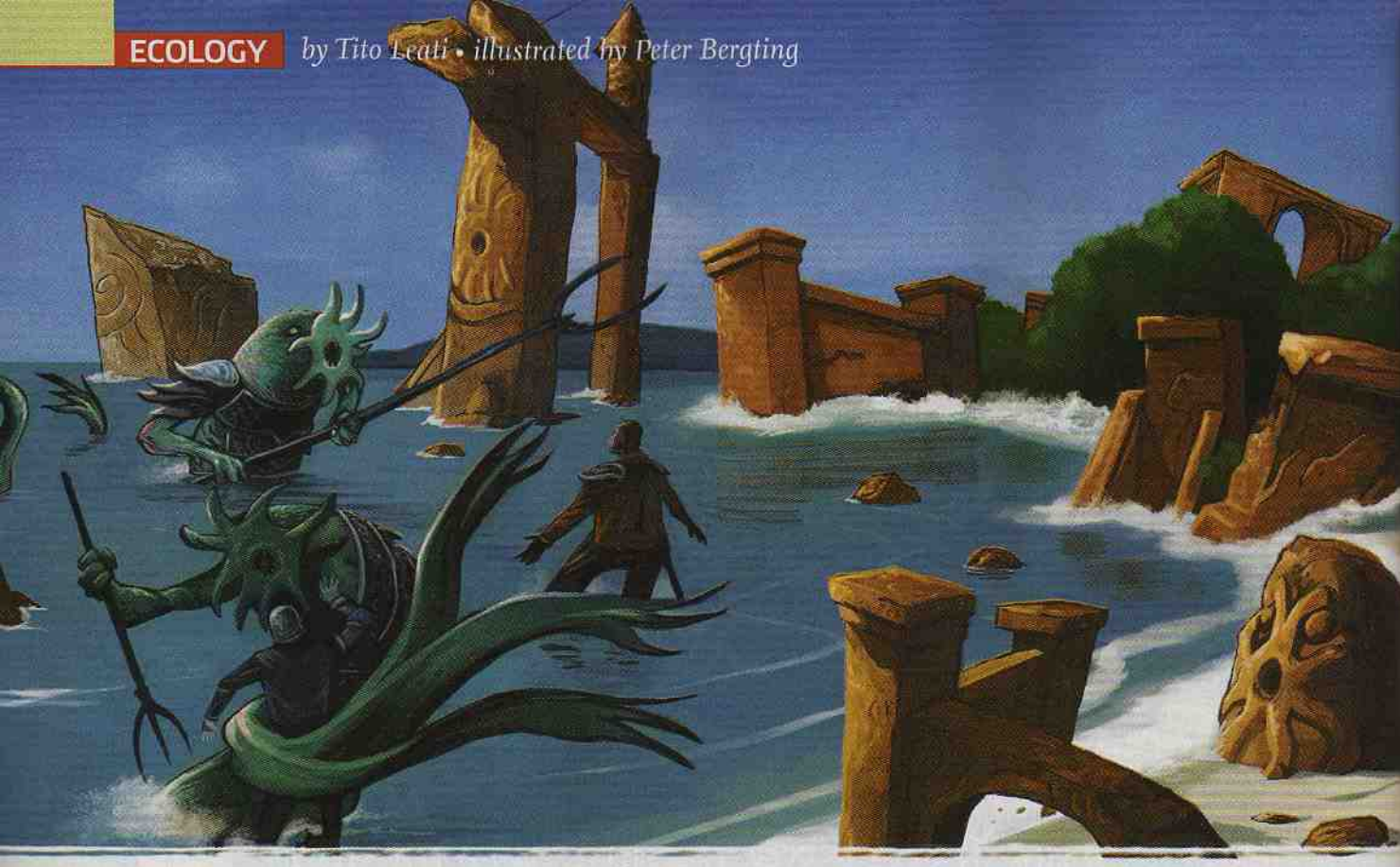
VOICE OF BITTER EXPERIENCE [GENERAL]

Your attachment to a vanished deity serves as a terrifying example to the most devoted servants of other deities.

Prerequisites: Bluff 1 rank, Wedded to History, apostle of the lost background.

Effect: Whenever you face someone able to cast divine spells you may, as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, attempt to unnerve him by recounting the fate of your own deity. Make a Bluff check opposed by the target's Sense Motive check. If you win, the target is shaken for the remainder of the encounter. If your check exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the target is frightened for one round as well. This is a mind-affecting, language dependent effect.

by Tito Leati • illustrated by Peter Bergting



THE ECOLOGY OF THE KOPRU

"Who can fathom the depths of the abyss?"
—Ecclesiastes

A monstrous mix of human, eel, squid, and lamprey, koprus are deep-dwelling amphibians of evil disposition and appearance. Uncivilized and savage, koprus dwell under the sea, roaming submerged caverns and ruins. They are rarely seen above the surface, but sometimes they emerge from the watery depths and saltwater pits of ancient coastal cities to prey on the local population. Whether these creatures have goals beyond their hunger for live flesh is a mystery. It is rumored, though, that koprus were once a civilized and powerful race ruled by a caste of sorceress-matrons and fanatically devoted to Demogorgon, the Prince of Demons.

HISTORY OF THE KOPRU

Although they have regressed to a primitive state, koprus were once part of a great civilization comprised of a multitude of city-states across the oceans of the world. More than three thousand years ago, these twisted, aquatic cities were founded at the time of a great proliferation of the kopru race, which coincided with an abundant growth of their basic food source, a particular species of clam mollusk called kopura. At that time, the largest of the kopura were imbued with demonic magic by early kopru shamans, who cultivated a fiendish specimen sacred to Demogorgon. These fiendish clams invariably produced black pearls of great size and value, used by the kopru shamans to work dark magic. The shamans founded a class of ruling nobility, and kopru power swiftly

spread throughout the oceans with the rise of thousands of city-states in the following centuries.

Although the first kopru nobles were male shamans, the physically stronger and sorcery-attuned females soon took charge, and the government of the city-states developed as a form of matriarchate, an oligarchy of noble families headed by the eldest female member. Wherever they ruled, koprus enslaved masses of primitive sahuagin, locathah, and sea elves, which they captured in hunting raids and subjugated with their domination ability. The kopru forged occasional alliances with kuo-toas but were almost always in conflict with ixitxachitls. They fought ritual wars with neighboring city-states and periodically sacrificed slaves to two supernatural entities, which they believed to be the creators of their race: Prukal, the Dark Globe, and Shothotugg, the Great Whirlpool.

About two thousand years ago, the kopru were at the peak of their civilization and were among the most powerful marine races of the world—exceeded only by the deeper-dwelling aboleths. A sudden, unexplained disease caused the koprus' kopura food source to diminish, resulting in a severe shortage. This famine, coupled with the depletion of other marine resources, marked the beginning of their decline.

The kopru grew increasingly greedy and angry, and they developed cruel eating habits. To survive the famine, they killed and devoured their slaves, and in some cases members of the nobility practiced cannibalism on lesser kopru. Wars erupted among bordering city-states, and strife grew between kopru nobles and commoners, until a great rebellion of slaves finally caused the destruction of most of the undersea city-states about fifteen-hundred years ago. Nobles were hunted and mercilessly

KNOWLEDGE OF THE KOPRU

The following table shows the result of a Knowledge (nature) check as it relates to koprus. Members of aquatic races, veteran sailors, and natives of remote islands most commonly possess this information. The kopru appears on page 134 of *Monster Manual II*.

Knowledge (nature)

DC	Result
16	Koprus are deep-dwelling monsters with eel-like bodies and humanoid torsos. They are savage, cunning, and terrible to behold.
21	Koprus are mainly driven by hunger and the will to survive. Aside from powerful claws and tails, their gazes can bend others to do their will.
26	Koprus are the descendants of a fallen ancient civilization that once spanned the oceans. The fall of that culture has left them scattered and largely disorganized.
31	Rumors exist of koprus with deformed skulls, five-digit talons, and exceptionally large eyes. These koprus comprise a special caste of highly intelligent specimens that once ruled their ancient civilization.
36	Koprus actively worship Demogorgon. As servants of the Prince of Demons, they often have demonic allies and fiendish weapons.

slain by both their rebellious slaves and vindictive subjects. Kopru society fell to ruins. As other marine races occupied their territories, the few surviving kopru went into hiding in remote depths.

Today, kopru ruins are remembered as drowned places of great woe and slaughter, and have been abandoned and shunned ever since. Only the savage descendants of the kopru of old return to the places of their former glory, both to seek refuge from their enemies and to relieve the insane melancholia that constantly torments them.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE KOPRU

The serpentine body of the average kopru is 9 feet long and weighs 300 pounds. A humanlike torso with a large, anguilliform head and two muscular, spine-covered arms extends down into a powerful tail that splits into three flexible tentacles. Kopru hands have four webbed and clawed fingers, useful for swimming but as dexterous as any landdweller's—perhaps even more so. Their skin varies from tones of gray to blue, green, and orange, and is thick and oily like a whale's, providing excellent protection from the elements. Upon their forward-jutting heads, koprus' bulging eyes resemble polished orbs of mother-of-pearl protected by heavy, wrinkled lids. Below, the mouth is a fanged orifice surrounded by four to eight prehensile tentacles, a number that differs depending on breeding and regional variation. An average specimen lives for fifty years.

Once a year, female koprus lay three to five eggs, which need a very warm environment to hatch. For this reason, koprus usually mate in tropical regions, and the females look for hot springs or sulfuric waters to lay their fecundated eggs. Koprus enjoy bathing in such hot water and can tolerate boiling temperatures without harm, sealing their eyes, nostrils, and gills if fully immersed. Koprus have both gills and lungs, although these organs are atrophied in some regional breeds (see the Amphibious Kopru sidebar). They are excellent swimmers but are extremely clumsy out of the water, where they must slither and crawl using their tail and hands.

KOPRU MAGIC

Koprus practice strange magic drawing upon the powers of their fiendish patrons.

KOPRU SKULL DEFORMATION

The young of kopru nobles were once deformed in order to enhance their strength and intellect, making them so-called "high skull" kopru. Although forgotten by most of the race, a few surviving nobles still engage in this practice. The effects of skull deformation result in the following traits (in addition to their modifiers for size and advancement) and related changes to a kopru's statistics. Only a kopru who underwent the proper rituals soon after birth can benefit from these alterations.

Size: Large.
Hit Dice: 12 HD.
Abilities: +2 Dexterity, +4 Intelligence, +4 Charisma.
CR: 9.

KOPURA SHELLS

Large, black clams filled with bitter, Hell-red meat, many kopru spellcasters employ kopura shells in their magic. Any spell with the evil descriptor cast using a koprua shell as an additional material component has its effective caster level increased by +2. The shell is destroyed in the spell's casting. Koprua shells are exceeding rare and cost upward of 100 gp.

In ancient times, kopru nobles customarily practiced skull deformation as a sign of noble status, enhancing newborns both physically and mentally. The deformation allowed the newborn to grow bigger through a program of hypernutrition. Being more intelligent and stronger than their lesser brethren, noble, or "high skull," koprus were natural leaders and ruled without opposition for more than a thousand years.

Koprus are capable of speech, but infrequently do so. On the rare occasions they do vocalize, their words are ugly strings of halting gasps, hisses, and belches. Among their own kind they communicate through their gazes—an eerie, completely silent form of communication. Noble koprus, thanks to their skull deformation and larger eyes, seem able to perform more elaborate communication.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE KOPRU

Their ancient civilization shattered, most kopru live alone or in small bands, caring only about survival. While dangerous predators and fearsome combatants, melancholia has become a common problem among koprus, which show a distinctive maniacal-depressive behavioral pattern. When not pushed by hunger, most koprus lie inactive in their lairs for weeks, a factor that contributes to their inability to rebuild anything of their past splendor. Koprus almost never wear clothing or jewelry, but practice tattooing and piercing with bone instruments and ornaments. They can wield weapons but rarely do so.

At the time of the city-states, kopru commoners, the so-called "low skulls," lived under the strict regulations ruled out by their dominating caste, the "high skulls." The matriarchal oligarchy of the koprus was a trapezoidal-pyramidal scheme of ruling families, with a small group at the top and a much larger number near the bottom. The "high skulls" had different levels of influence and prestige, depending on the number of individuals in their service and on their degree of affiliation to the colleges of shamans and sorcerers. "Low skulls," on the other hand, were all the same, with little influence and voice.

Kopru commoners built houses, palaces, and temples, tended the kopura vats, and fought in slave raids and ritual wars between city-states—mock wars where every death was considered a sacrifice to Demogorgon. They were allowed to mate and reproduce, but they could not form named families on their own and could typically only earn respect through combat in ritual warfare.

In kopru noble families, the matriarchs ruled as ruthless tyrants, constantly fomenting strife among their subjects to divide and rule them more easily. Their prestige in kopru society was the highest, and they were chosen among the females of a house for their might as sorceresses. The exclusively male college of shamans was the other, equally potent power in the city-state. Although they had a great degree of freedom in their matters, the shamans were considered the voices of Demogorgon and, when organized, could cow even the matriarchs.

At the bottom of the social ladder were the masses of nonkopru slaves, who had no rights whatsoever and were doomed to lifelong exploitation.

Koprus were very observant of the superstitious practices linked to Prukal and Shothotugg, the Dark Globe and the Great Whirlpool of their mythology. More than "real" deities, Prukal and Shothotugg represented darkness and water, or the "qualities" of the Abyss, and were believed to be the parents of Demogorgon. According to kopru legends, Prukal manifests at sunset above the sky, enclosing the entire world in darkness for the night. The stars are holes punched through Prukal when it was wounded by the light beyond. This happened the day land emerged from the sea-covered world, confining the power of the koprus to just a portion of the world. The matter that once filled the holes fell unto the world as dark dust, which transformed the kopura. Since then, fiendish kopura have supplied the kopru with powerful black pearls made of Prukal's own substance, which are capable of incredible dark magic. As such, koprus love the darkness of the ocean depths and hate any form of skylight. They are almost never seen above the surface during the day, and they prefer moonless, starless nights to emerge for any reason. Koprus consider starlight a cursed element and mark themselves with special, star-shaped tattoos to neutralize its influence.

The other primeval deity of the kopru, Shothotugg, symbolizes both their favorite element and their greatest supernatural faculty. Koprus believe that Shothotugg lives in large underground basins and the deepest of pits. Shothotugg's chaotic whirling is where everything originates and where everything must return. The day the first kopru city state of Shotho'Kopur was founded, the shamans performed a massive sacrifice, dropping tons of treasure and hundreds of victims into a great chasm on the bottom of the sea. In return, Shothotugg granted the koprus their ability to dominate sentient beings with their hypnotic gaze. Nowadays, koprus still make similar sacrifices on much smaller scales and out of sheer superstition.

Although the vast majority of koprus seen today are round-headed "low skulls," a few surviving nobles are rumored to live under the ruins of some cities, where they have renewed the traditions of their race and rediscovered many secrets of their ancestors. Having shaken off their racial melancholia, these "high skulls" even dream of restoring the might of their ancient civilization. Regardless of caste, all koprus revere Demogorgon and, if called to his service, answer with the fervor of true fanatics.

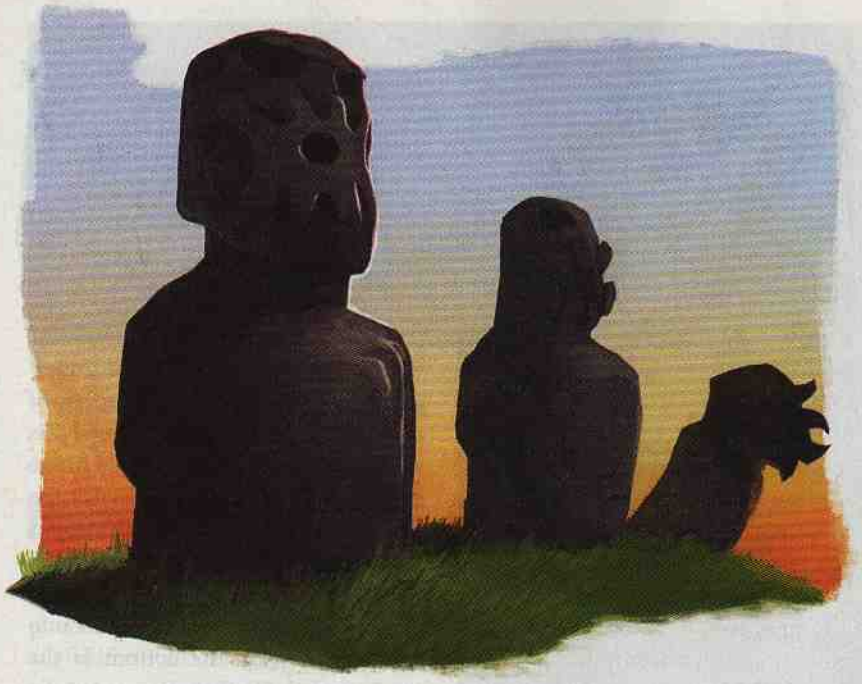
AMPHIBIOUS KOPRU

Koprus are a disparate race, with wide regional variations in color, number of tentacles, and ability to function on land. While some deep-dwelling koprus live their whole lives beneath the surface (like those presented in *Monster Manual II*), those who lurk near islands, in marshes, or underground might make regular forays out of the water. Such coastal koprus usually possess the amphibious trait, although it makes them no more adept at moving on land. This addition does not change a kopru's CR or any other abilities.

Amphibious (Ex): Although koprus are aquatic, they can survive indefinitely on land.

KOPRU RUINS

Kopru ruins lie in many places at the bottom of the oceans. They are huge complexes of palaces, pyramidal temples, lesser houses, and large squares, now reduced to heaps of salt-encrusted rubble covered with seaweed, coral, and anemones. A decorative theme common to all kopru architecture is the depiction of the kopru head. Kopru heads were sometimes carved into colossal proportions, like the 40-foot-tall ones sometimes found on coastlines near areas of kopru influence. Sometimes heads are carved in ivory, coral, and amber, or



have details in mother-of-pearl, jade, and other semiprecious materials. These heads are often larger than life-size, and can have incredible value as art objects.

THE CULT OF DEMOGORGON

In ancient times, koprus worshiped Demogorgon extensively, and their shamans formed an organized clergy at the service of the Prince of Demons and his supposed progenitors. The adepts were invariably male, and the most powerful among them were able to summon the Prince of Demons in a way that their body merged with Demogorgon's essence. When this happened, the kopru shamans permanently transformed into hideous, two-headed mutants who were actually aspects of Demogorgon himself (see "City of Broken Idols" in *Dungeon* #145).

Sacrifices in the name of Prukal—Demogorgon's mother in kopru mythology—took place on special occasions, such as celebrations, the conclusion of a successful slave raid, the end of ritual war between two city-states, or the annual laying of eggs by a matriarch. The sacrifices were held atop great basalt pyramids, which were invariably topped by apparatuses used to crush the victims. The apparatus looked like a large amber cylinder with a descending stone piston, which pushed down the millstone on creatures trapped inside. After the death of the victims, the millstone was raised and the shamans would foresee the future through the bloodstains on the calendar stone's surface.

The pyramids were usually built over a deep undersea pit, where weekly sacrifices were done in the name of Shothotugg—Demogorgon's other mother. These pits were connected to nearly bottomless undersea rifts. The treasure cast into the pits was considered taboo, and whomever tried to recover it was immediately put to death, be it a noble, commoner, slave, or foreigner.

ADVANCED KOPRU

Oleklan is the priestess of a group of koprus who rediscovered the traditions of their race in the labyrinths under Shotho'Kopur. Her skull was deformed at birth by an incredibly old kopru, probably an undead survivor of the original kopru civilization. During her life, Oleklan has ritually deformed the skull of about thirty other koprus, effectively creating a new noble family, whose female members are already showing sorcerous talent. Oleklan has also recruited about two-hundred normal koprus, forming one of the largest organized groups since the fall of the city-states. Up until now, the aging Oleklan has cared only about the survival and prosperity of her family, but her sons have resumed active worship of Demogorgon and might be planning some greater evil already.

KOPRU PROPHECIES

Kopru writing was a clumsy, loose, and rarely used ideographic code with hundreds of thousands of complex symbols spread throughout the various city-states across the world. This writing system is today undecipherable without the help of magic, and has been long forgotten by the kopru themselves. Numbers, on the other hand, were strictly codified in handy ciphers by kopru law. These numbers were engraved on the calendar millstones used by the shamans to crush sacrifice victims and perform divinations. The way the victim's blood stained the numbers on the stone's surface was the omen the shamans needed to foresee the future.

Having a strong oracular tradition, kopru shamans often recorded their perceptions of the future in the same way other civilizations might recount the past. Thus, much of kopru artwork—mostly being elaborate bas-reliefs and heads—have dates, either in the past or future, incorporated into them. As the kopru calendar begins with the founding of their first and greatest city-state, Shotho'Kopur (nearly 13,600 years ago), every date measures from that time. For example, a massive onyx relief drug from kopru ruins off the coast of Keoland and now hanging in the Gradsul library shows horrible twin serpents breaking from an egg covered in continents and screaming humanoids. Symbols depicting the number 13,597 circle the work.

OLEKLAN **CR 12**

Female advanced kopru sorcerer 7
CE Large monstrous humanoid (aquatic)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +10
Languages Aquan, Common

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 15
hp 134 hp (17 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +16, **Will** +15

Speed 5 ft. (1 square); swim 40 ft.

ARABIC	ROMAN	KOPRU
0	none	Kopru's skull
1	I	black pearl
2	II	eyes
3	III	hair
4	IV	mouth
5	V	noble hand
10	X	bowed pearl
50	L	bowed hand
100	C	bubbled pearl
500	D	bubbled hand
1,000	M	whirlpool
/	none	slash

SAMPLE NUMBERS	
11	
24	
1,142	
4,898	
27,753	
1,456,027	
2,562,253,151	

KOPRU NUMBERS

The kopru numerical system is a hybrid of Roman (prevalent) and Arabic. Numbers are written as the Roman ones with the following exceptions:

1) **A "zero" symbol exists, although it is used only to indicate "0" and multiples of thousands, millions, and billions (see below).**
2) **Special symbols for "2," "3," and "4" exist. They are used only as the unit digits when a number (or prefix, see below) ends with them (i.e., "234" or "13," but not "16" or "39").**
3) **To make unit digits from "6" to "9," the symbols for 1" and "5" are used as in the Roman system.**
4) **When more than one "M" symbol is needed, multiple thousands are showed by a prefix number separated by a slash, which represents thousands, millions, and billions.**
5) **Multiple thousands, millions, and billions are written in a Roman/Arabic way, putting the "zero" symbol after a normal number for thousands, millions, and billions each in the prefix before the slash (in much the same way as a comma is used).**

Melee tail slap +22 (1d8+8), and 2 claws +20 (1d6+4), and bite +20 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +15; Grp +27
Atk Options constrict 4d6+12, improved grab
Special Actions dominate person
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds, wand of magic missile* (5th)
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th)
3rd—(5/day) *haste, hold person* (DC 19)
2nd—(7/day) *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 18)
1st—(7/day) *charm person* (DC 17), *identify, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 15), *shield*
0—(6/day) *dancing lights, detect poison, detect magic, light, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 26, Dex 22, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 10, Cha 19
SQ amphibious
Feats Ability Focus (dominate person), Combat Reflexes, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Iron Will, Multiattack, Spell Focus (enchantment)
Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +18, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +10, Search +13, Spellcraft +20, Spot +10 Swim +18
Possessions combat gear plus *ring of Dexterity +4* (as *gloves of Dexterity*), *ring of protection +2*

Constrict (Ex) With a successful grapple check, Oleklan can constrict a grabbed opponent, dealing 4d6+12 points of bludgeoning damage.
Improved Grab (Ex) If Oleklan hits an opponent of her own size or smaller, she deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If she wins the grapple check, she establishes a hold and con constrict.
Dominate Person (Su) Once per day, Oleklan can produce an effect like that of a *dominate person* spell (caster level 10th, Will save DC 16), except that the range is 180 feet and the duration is eight days.
Amphibious (Ex) Although koprus are aquatic, they can survive indefinitely on land.

Heart of Darkness

by Greg Vaughan • illustrated by Ben Wootten

To fight back against the rising savage tide, this article series gives you, the player, the tips, tricks, and tools you need to avoid being swept away. While the pages of DUNGEON magazine present DMs with every vile plot and cunning monster needed to run the Savage Tide Adventure Path, DRAGON offers details and options to help you stay on course. This month's installment offers information on the mysterious city at the center of the Isle of Dread's plateau as well as a new prestige class developed by the natives of this region to battle the heart of darkness that poisons their ancient land.

ADVENTURE TIE

This installment of Savage Tidings links to the seventh episode of the Adventure Path, "City of Broken Idols," presented in DUNGEON #145.

TOTEMIC DEMONSLAYER

When darkness infects the heart, it takes the tip of a spear to excise it.

—Olman Saying

The Olman natives of the Isle of Dread have suffered from the depredations of predators both natural and unnatural since the fall of their empire. For generations, the few remnants on the island have survived on the verge of extinction, facing the unknown dangers of the jungle night that creep from a lonely plateau at the heart of the island. They learned that high

walls and organized defenses could fend off the dangers of the jungle, but another kind of weapon was needed to fend off the dangers that came from beyond. To this calling arose the totemic demonslayers, a small order of natives who, along with missionary members from the Church of the Whirling Fury, have developed powerful tools for defeating fiends.

Becoming a Totemic Demonslayer

Developed to combat the threat posed by the unnatural incursions of fiends, totemic demonslayers are wilderness warriors skilled at facing these otherworldly foes. Using their affinity with the natural world and the strength of their belief in ancestral totems, these demonslayers gain special adaptations and powers useful in combating such horrors.

Becoming a totemic demonslayer is not limited to the Olman, but it is difficult for others to do so, as it requires the special blessings and rituals of both the Olman and the Church of the Whirling Fury. Only when such rituals have been completed can the demonslayer begin collecting totemic tattoos and utilizing the abilities provided by the prestige class.

Rangers, barbarians, druids, and those characters with a strong connection to nature are most likely to take this class. Fighters and monks have been known to take this class for its martial qualities and role in defense of the people of the Olman settlements. Likewise, sorcerers sometimes gain a few levels, harnessing their own natural magical abilities and augmenting them with those provided by the totem spirits to fight the forces of darkness. Paladins would be well-suited for this class but are exceedingly rare in the Olman culture in and around the Isle of Dread.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any nonevil.

Skills: Knowledge (nature) 8 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 2 ranks, Survival 2 ranks.

Base Attack: +4.

Special: The recipient must undergo a ritual conducted by an Olman holy man and the Church of the Whirling Fury.

Class Features

Totemic demonslayers are extremely versatile, having a great variety of options as they advance in level within the class. As they increase in power, they tailor their abilities to best suit their favored tactics in dealing with the unnatural menaces that threaten their island home.

Favored Enemy (Ex): At 1st level, a totemic demonslayer gains the favored enemy (evil outsider) ability just as if he was a ranger who had chosen evil outsiders as a favored enemy. The ability is identical to the ranger ability, giving the totemic demonslayer a +2 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against evil outsiders. Likewise, he gets a +2 bonus on weapon damage rolls against such creatures. If he already has evil outsider as a favored

TOTEMIC DEMONSLAYER — HIT DIE: D10

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	— Spells per Day — 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Favored enemy, lesser totem tattoo	0	—	—	—
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Detect demons	1	—	—	—
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Lesser totem tattoo	1	0	—	—
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Summon spell dampening	1	1	—	—
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Improved favored enemy, lesser totem tattoo	1	1	0	—
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Resist treachery +2	1	1	1	—
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Greater totem tattoo	2	1	1	0
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Augmented detect demons, resist treachery +4	2	1	1	1
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Greater favored enemy, greater totem tattoo	2	2	1	1
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Resist treachery (immune), greater totem tattoo	2	2	2	1

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Climb, Concentration, Craft, Handle Animal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (the planes), Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Survival, Swim.

enemy through another class, these bonuses stack with those.

Lesser Totem Tattoo (Su): At 1st level, a totemic demonslayer gains his first lesser totem tattoo. He gains another lesser totem tattoo upon reaching 3rd level and 5th level. Totem tattoos are described below.

Spells: A totemic demonslayer has the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, he must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a totemic demonslayer with a Wisdom of 10 cannot cast these spells. Totemic demonslayer bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the totemic demonslayer's Wisdom modifier. When he gets 0 spells per day of a given spell level, he gains only the bonus spells he would be entitled to based on his Wisdom score for that spell level. The totemic demonslayer's spell list appears below. He has access to any spell on the list and can freely choose which to prepare, just as a cleric. A totemic demonslayer prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does (although he cannot spontaneously cast *cure* or *inflict* spells).

Detect Demons (Sp): At 2nd level, a totemic demonslayer can detect outsiders with the evil subtype within 60 feet at will as the spell *detect evil*. This ability does not, however, detect outsiders that are ethereal, have mind shielding, or who are present only in the body of someone or something that is possessed by a demon, such as a fiend of possession (see *Fiend Folio*).

Summon Spell Dampening (Su): To deal with one of the most deadly tools of demons, the ability to instantly call in demonic reinforcements, at 4th level a totemic demonslayer can inhibit their power to do so. Once per day, a totemic demonslayer can create a dampening field in a 60-foot-radius emanation. Conjuration (summoning) and conjuration (calling) spells and spell-like abilities automatically fail within this radius, although creatures summoned outside the dampening field can enter it normally. The dampening field lasts 10 rounds. Creatures summoned or called before the totemic demonslayer creates the dampening field are unaffected. At 7th level, a totemic demonslayer can use this ability one additional time per day.

Improved Favored Enemy (Ex): Upon reaching 5th level, a totemic demonslayer's training and techniques for battling evil outsiders are further honed, raising the associated favored enemy bonuses to +4. As before, these bonuses stack with any the totemic demonslayer has from other classes.

Resist Treachery (Su): As the totemic demonslayer increases in ability, he grows more inured to the wiles and craftiness of demons and their ilk. At 6th level, he gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells or effects. This bonus increases to +4 at 8th level. At 10th level, a totemic demonslayer becomes immune to such effects altogether.

Greater Totem Tattoo (Su): At 7th level, a totemic demonslayer gains his first greater totem tattoo. He gains additional greater totem tattoos at 9th level and 10th level. Totem tattoos are described below. If the totemic demonslayer chooses, he can elect to gain two lesser totem tattoos in the place of any greater totem tattoo.

Augmented Detect Demons (Sp): At 8th level, a totemic demonslayer's ability to detect demons is honed to the point that it functions even against evil outsiders that are ethereal, using mind shielding, or only present in the body of a host that has been possessed. It also detects any creature under the control of an evil outsider through charm or dominate effects, although it is not able to determine HD or the source of the controlling influence unless the demon itself is within range.

Greater Favored Enemy (Ex): Upon reaching 9th level, a totemic demonslayer's training and techniques for battling evil outsiders are so honed that the associated favored enemy bonuses increase to +6. As before, these bonuses stack with any the totemic demonslayer has from other classes.

Totemic Demonslayer Spell List

Totemic demonslayers choose their spells from the following list:

1st Level: *bless water, bless weapon, delay poison, detect evil, entangle, faerie fire, magic fang, magic weapon, obscuring mist, pass without trace, protection from evil, remove fear, resistance, speak with animals, summon nature's ally I.*

2nd Level: *align weapon, barkskin, bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, glitterdust, owl's wisdom, resist energy, silence, speak with plants, summon nature's ally II, zone of truth.*

3rd Level: *darkvision, daylight, dispel magic, good hope, greater magic fang, greater magic weapon, haste, heroism, magic circle against evil, protection from energy, quench, remove blindness/deafness, remove curse, summon nature's ally III, tree shape.*

4th Level: *animal growth, break enchantment, commune with nature, dimensional anchor, dismissal, dispel evil, freedom of movement, neutralize poison, shout, spell immunity, summon nature's ally IV, tree stride.*

Totem Tattoos

Totemic demonslayers gain their special abilities against their otherworldly foes through belief in the power of their ancestor spirits as represented by the creatures native to their lands. These powers can only be gained through the activation of totem tattoos that the totemic demonslayer acquires through advancement in his prestige class. The totemic demonslayer can never have more tattoos than allowed by his level. Additional tattoos invariably smudge and run during the tattooing process and leave permanent scarring where they are attempted. Once a totem tattoo has been selected by a totemic demonslayer, that choice can never be changed, nor the tattoo erased, since it represents the char-

acter's acceptance of that ancestral spirit into his soul. If a tattoo is cut or burned off, or if the limb bearing the tattoo is lost, the tattoo reappears at some other location on the body within a few days. In either case, the totemic demonslayer never loses the use of the tattoo's powers.

Activating a totem tattoo is a swift action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Each tattoo can only be used once per day, although the same tattoo may be taken multiple times as levels increase allowing for additional uses of an ability per day. Totem tattoos are supernatural abilities that can be dispelled (caster level equal to the totemic demonslayers level).

When a totem tattoo is activated, a DC 15 Spot check notices a faint aura resembling the shape of the totem animal surrounding the totemic demonslayer for 1 round. This animal shape can clearly be seen by anyone using *see invisibility*. More than one totem tattoo can be in use at the same time.

Lesser Totem Tattoos

The following tattoos are just a sample of those that might be available. Your DM might approve unique tattoos suited to the style of your character.

Allosaurus: The bearer of this tattoo gains the improved grab ability, enabling him to start a grapple attempt without provoking an attack of opportunity if he hits with a natural attack. If he establishes a hold, he can rake like an allosaurus at his normal attack bonus as if using a secondary weapon dealing 1d8 points of damage + his Str modifier. This ability lasts for 3 rounds.

Ape: If the bearer of this tattoo hits a single opponent twice in the same round with melee attacks, he can rend the opponent's body. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6 points of damage + double the demonslayer's Strength modifier. The totemic demonslayer does not have to activate this ability prior to making his attacks, but rather can activate the tattoo after having made two successful melee hits. Once activated, this tattoo's ability remains in effect for 3 rounds.

Baboon: Upon activation of this tattoo, the bearer gains a climb speed of 30 feet, a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, and can take 10 on Climb checks even if rushed or threatened. This effect lasts for 10 rounds.

Badger: The bearer of this tattoo can enter a rage identical to that of a 1st-level barbarian, gaining a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution and a –2 penalty to AC (see page 25 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Boar: This tattoo grants the ferocity of a boar. It allows the bearer to continue fighting without penalty even while disabled or dying. Once activated, this ability lasts for 10 rounds.

Crocodile: The bearer of this tattoo gains the crocodile's ability to hold its breath. He can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 × his Constitution score before he risks drowning. This ability lasts for 1 hour once it is activated.

Deinonychus: The bearer of this tattoo gains the ability to make a pounce attack as a deinonychus can. When activated, he can make a full attack when charging a foe. If he has also activated an allosaurus tattoo, he gains those rake attacks as well while using the pounce attack. This tattoo lasts for 3 rounds once it is activated.

Dimetrodon: The bearer of this tattoo can activate it to gain the dimetrodon's ability to move with sudden speed. He increases his land speed by 50 feet for 1 round, during which he gains a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

Sea Turtle: When the bearer of this tattoo activates it, his skin hardens like the shell of a sea turtle, and he gains damage reduction 2/— for 5 rounds. This does not stack with the damage reduction provided by the ankylosaurus tattoo.

Snake: The bearer of this tattoo can activate it to gain both the improved grab ability and a constrict attack. He can attempt to start a grapple without provoking an attack of opportunity if he hits with a natural attack, and, if he establishes a hold, he can use his arms and legs to constrict his opponent for 1d8 points of damage + double his Strength modifier. This ability lasts for 3 rounds once activated.

Greater Totem Tattoos

These greater tattoos cover large portions of the demonslayer's skin, making them nearly impossible to hide.

Ankylosaurus: The bearer of this tattoo, upon activation, causes his skin to toughen like the hard carapace of an ankylosaurus, giving him damage reduction 4/— for 5 rounds. This does not stack with the damage reduction provided by the sea turtle tattoo.

Giant Wasp: By activating this tattoo, the bearer coats all of his piercing and slashing weapons with a poison. The poison functions as a ravage (as described in the *Book of Exalted Deeds*), so it affects only evil creatures but is able to penetrate the poison immunity of demons. Injury, Fort DC 14, Dex 1d6/Dex 1d6. The coating lasts for up to 3 rounds or until the weapon successfully strikes an opponent.

Phanaton: The bearer of this tattoo can activate it to gain the ability to glide for 10 minutes. This negates falling damage and allows him 20 feet of forward travel for every 5 feet of descent, effectively giving him a fly speed of 20 feet while falling (average maneuverability). He cannot hover, even if his maneuverability rate

increases. He can't glide while carrying a medium or heavy load, nor while unconscious or helpless. Unlike other tattoos, this one can be activated as an immediate action, so the bearer need not wait until his turn to do so.

Rakasta: The bearer of this tattoo temporarily emulates the "iron war claws" used by the catfolk. This tattoo makes any natural weapons of the bearer function as if they were composed of cold iron. This effect last for 5 rounds when activated.

Triceratops: This tattoo gives its bearer the powerful charge attack. On a successful charge attack when this tattoo is activated, the bearer deals an extra 4d6 points of damage + four times his Strength modifier as if from a natural weapon. Activating this tattoo only allows the bearer to make one powerful charge attack before the effects wear off.

Tyrannosaurus: This tattoo illustrates the true king of the Isle of Dread, the mighty tyrannosaurus. When the bearer activates this tattoo he gains a powerful bite attack at his normal attack bonus as if using a secondary weapon that deals 3d6 points of damage + three times his Str modifier. This effect lasts for 3 rounds once activated.

Whirlwind: An addition of the Church of the Whirling Fury, once activated, this tattoo allows its bearer to fly with a speed of 60 and perfect maneuverability. In addition, while this ability is in effect any critical threat made by the bearer of this tattoo against an evil outsider is automatically confirmed. This effect lasts for 1 minute once activated.

Playing a Totemic Demonslayer

The totemic demonslayers represent the highest ideals of the ancient Olman culture blended with some aspects of modern religion. They serve as protectors against the nameless dread that threatens to eradicate human existence from the isle and serve as front-line fighters when those threats materialize as something more than the standard beasts and dangers that occasionally emerge from the jungles. When a wall, fire, or warriors with spears are insufficient to deal with the threat, it enters the domain of the totemic demonslayers. This is a responsibility they take very seriously.

Demonslayers rely on a more naturalistic approach to dealing with these threats, maintaining the traditions and beliefs of the Olman and the watchfulness of their ancestor spirits. Combined with the gifts and teachings of the Church of the Whirling Fury, demonslayers finally find themselves with the tools to take action. While many fight the demons preying upon their people because such creatures are anathema, not to the ideology of some deity but rather to the natural order itself, some find a deeper divine drive to cleanse the land.

Combat

Totemic demonslayers typically work alone, seeking to prevent evil outsiders from preying on their fellow tribesmen. They excel at using the wilderness and its natural features to their advantage when dealing with the outsiders who are often new to the Material Plane and unfamiliar with its terrain. They are cunning trapmakers and take advantage of the deadly local fauna, sometimes luring unsuspecting demons into the clutches of the island's powerful predators. When direct confrontation is necessary, however, they do not hesitate to call upon their ancestor spirits through their magical tattoos and take the fight to their foes. If necessary, they have also been known to organize whole villages to effectively combat incursions by large numbers of demonic marauders.

Totemic Demonslayer Lore

Characters with the bardic knowledge ability or ranks in Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (religion) can research totemic demonslayers to learn more about them. A check made while in an Olman village gains a +10 bonus on the roll. When a character makes a bardic knowledge check or a skill check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 20: Among the Olman of the Isle of Dread, there are some heroes of renown who slay demons and protect the people from the unnatural terrors of the island.

DC 25: The Olman are able to harness both the powers of their deceased ancestors and the animal totems sacred to their clans to fight against evil outsiders that plague the island.

DC 30: Sacred tattoos on warriors known as demonslayers grant them the powers of the animals they depict whether it be speed, strength, or even stranger abilities. These demonslayers combine their ancestral beliefs with some aspects of modern faith to garner even greater powers in their fight.

Sample Totemic Demonslayer

Jakara is a totemic demonslayer who has been captured by forces loyal to the kopru of the Isle of Dread. He is being held in the troglodyte village of Laogroat but can be rescued by the PCs in "The Lightless Depths" in *Dungeon* #144. His captivity has left him a half-crazed, broken man, although if treated with a *heal* spell or its equivalent he can recover enough to share the secrets of his prestige class with the player characters. At your discretion, Jakara could recover enough from his ordeal to even join the party as an NPC. In that case, his equipment is stored with the hermit and can be gathered before continuing with the adventure.

JAKARA OF THE TIGER CLAN CR 12

Male Olman human ranger 5/totemic demonslayer 7

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +5

Languages Olman

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Dodge,

AFFILIATION BONUS

Characters who advance in levels of the totemic demonslayer prestige class curry great favor with the Church of the Whirling Fury. These characters gain a +2 bonus to their affiliation score.

Mobility, light fortification 25%
hp 97 (12 HD)
Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5; +2 against enchantment

Speed 30 feet (6 squares)
Melee *+1 evil outsider bane shortspear* +17/+12/+7 (1d6+4)
Ranged shortbow +14/+14/+9/+4 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +15
Atk Options Blind-Fight, Lunging Strike, Rapid Shot, Spring Attack, favored enemy animals +4, improved favored enemy evil outsiders +6

Special Actions totem tattoos, summon spell dampening 3/day
Combat Gear 2 *potions of magic fang*, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *divine scroll of owl's wisdom*, *pearl of force* (as bead), 2 flasks of acid, flask of holy water.
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—*longstrider*
Demonslayer Spells Prepared (CL 7th)
3rd—*heroism*
2nd—*bull's strength*, *summon nature's ally II*
1st—*bless weapon*, *magic fang*, *protection from evil*
Spell-like Abilities (CL 7th)
At will—*detect demons*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10
SQ animal companion, wild empathy +6 (+2 magical beasts)
Feats Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance[B], Lunging Strike*, Mobility, Rapid Shot[B], Spring Attack, Track[B], Weapon Focus (shortspear)[B]
Skills Climb +11, Hide +19, Knowledge (nature) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +12, Move Silently +19, Spot +5, Survival +13 (+15 aboveground or on other planes), Swim +9
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork leather armor, *+1 light wooden shield of light fortification*, *amulet of natural armor +2*, *+1 evil outsider bane short spear*, shortbow, 20 arrows, 10 cold iron arrows, *gloves of dexterity +2*

Lesser Totem Tattoos boar, dimetrodon, sea turtle
Greater Totem Tattoos tyrannosaurus
* From *Players Handbook II*

What Do You Know: The Central Plateau

The central plateau of the Isle of Dread looms over the island like a silent god hinting at glories past and promising new horrors to come. From this dominating geographic feature rose both the Thanaclan civilization and the seeds of destruction that laid it low. Rumors abound across the island of what truly lies at this, the Isle of Dread's dark heart. PCs who seek information can learn any of the following from among the natives.

- The ancient inhabitants of the plateau were the original builders of the mighty architectural achievements on the island, such as the great wall at the isthmus and many of the ruins and statuary buried in the jungle.
- Some think these builders were gods, others that they were travelers from a distant realm beyond this world.
- A remnant of the plateau's original inhabitants still exists by a lake of steam, where the gods of the island rumble beneath the earth in disquiet.
- Villagers who dwell atop the plateau serve an immortal chieftain made of stone.
- The horrors that plague the island today originate from otherworldly fogs that arise from the plateau.
- Secret inhuman creatures whisper in the ears of the villagers who live atop the plateau.
- Avoid the island's plateau. Its inhabitants have sunken into cannibalism and other savage practices.
- Explorers to the plateau speak of great architectural works, such as a mighty causeway reaching from the jungle below and elaborate ruined temples, but the remaining inhabitants live only in crude villages. Even they do not know who built the temples.
- Strange flying beasts have been seen over the mountain ridges near the center of the island. They have massive nests atop the great plateau.
- The plateau is the heart of the island. The gods are furious that darkness and evil have infested it and have turned their backs on the Olman people in punishment.

Volo's Guide

cormanthor: war amidst the trees

Well met again, gentles; Volothamp Geddarm, at thy service!

This time, I bring lore of fabled Cormanthor. The deep woods of the elves, whose mysterious shadows hide ruins, drow, marauding and skulking beasts, the proud Fair Folk, and dangerous adventurers—a place most folk of Faerûn love to hear about, but would not dare to set foot in; a vast realm of pastoral beauty and lurking deadliness.

Well, that's where Volo comes in. You need not venture into such perils; I'll do it for you. Spell-disguised as a tree or daring to scramble and trot about as myself, I went everywhere and saw (almost) everything. I nigh-perished in this fair cause, but am all the more proud to lay the fruits of my boldness before you. If you could do as I have done, and stand on the mossy banks of a clear, shimmering forest pool in the moonlight, gazing up past gigantic, gnarled oaks and shadowtops at the stars overhead, listening to the hooting calls and rustlings of the Elven Woods all around you... you could die happy.

(And probably would, in a breath or two, when something pounced on you.)

Volo

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Eric Boyd, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood
illustrated by James Zhang • cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

SPOILER WARNING

This article updates the current situation in Cormanthor to the end of the Year of Lightning Storms (1374 DR). It contains spoilers for game products such as *City of the Spider Queen* and the upcoming *Shadowdale: Scourging of the Dale*, as well as novels such as *Blackstaff*, the Last Mythal series, and the War of the Spider Queen series. Players and readers be warned.

HISTORY

For millennia, the great forest of Cormanthor has been known as the Elven Woods, home to the Fair Folk of Cormanthyr who held their domain against the ever-encroaching threat of humanity. Since the Weeping War (712–714 DR), the capitol city of Myth Drannor has been in ruins, overrun by all manner of monsters, while elders of the Elven Court ruled the rest of the woods. After centuries of deliberation, the Elven Court declared a Retreat in the Year of Moonfall (1344 DR), which led to a mass decampment of the Fair Folk for Evermeet, the Green Isle. Although they left traps and wards to guard their ancient homeland, even the Fair Folk were surprised at how quickly their ancient nemesis—the drow—infiltrated the Elven Woods. The dark elves were but the first of many groups to rush into the vacuum created by the Retreat, with the demon-tainted gold elves of House Dlardrageth and their fey'ri legions following soon thereafter. Now, in the wake of a great crusade launched from Evermeet, Myth Drannor has been reclaimed, but the struggle for control continues beneath the fabled boughs of Cormanthor's great oaks.

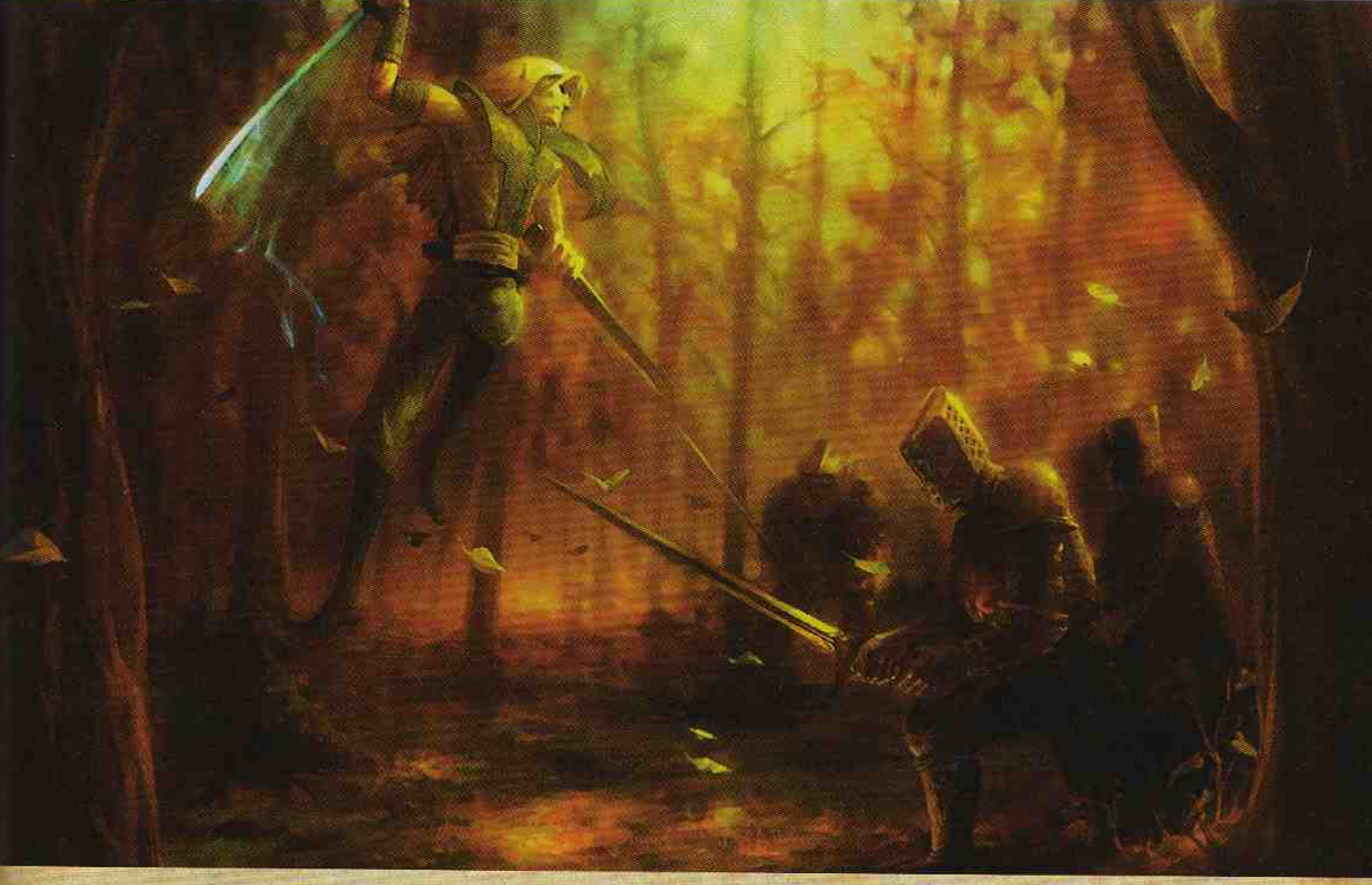
RECENT EVENTS

Over the past two-and-a-half years, Cormanthor has been convulsed by war. The following timeline summarizes the conflict.

1372 The Year of Wild Magic

Eleasis 28 — Lolth falls silent.

Eleint 23 — An army of goblins, ogres, giants, and demons led by Kurgoth Hellspawn, a half-fiend fire giant, attacks Maerimydra. Although most of Maerimydra's drow are slaughtered or enslaved, small bands of refugees escape into the surrounding Underdark, known as the Deep Wastes. House Dhuurniv, which fell into disgrace after forging the Spider's Truce during the Weeping War, is the only Maerimydran noble house to survive with significant holdings, as most lie outside the city.



1373 The Year of Rogue Dragons

Hammer 1 Sammaster completes his transformation of the Dracorage mythal, precipitating a Rage of Dragons independent of the appearance of the King-Killer Star in the heavens.

Ches 28 Lolth's Silence ends. Halisstra Melarn, Lolth's Lady Penitent, begins harrying the surface-dwelling drow of the Darkwoods, Eastern Fringe, and Velarswood.

Tarsakh 17 Zarlandris emerges from Glaun Bog and attacks the town of Highmoon. After a desperate battle, the great black wyrm dies amidst the rubble of the Tower of the Rising Moon. Lord Theremen Ulath vows to rebuild.

Mirtul 22 Sirvinhandra, thought dead for centuries, emerges from a hidden lair in the Dun Hills and lays siege to the Abbey of the Just Hammer. After inflicting terrible devastation, the great green wyrm is laid low by Lord High Justiciar High Avenger Deren Eriach.

Elesias 7 Thraxata the Flamefiend, a red dragon, sets fires across Battledale that consume large swaths of woodlands.

Taraskh 5 Narlgathra, a red wyrm, emerges from the ruins of Myth Drannor and flies south to attack Tangled Trees. The summertime inhabitants are slaughtered, leaving only a handful of survivors later discovered by far-wandering residents upon their return.

Taraskh 12 A band of dragon hunters destroys the Zhentarim garrison of Elmwood and three war galleys.

Uktar 13 Verthandantalynx, a green wyrm lairing in the depths of Cormanthor west of Myth Drannor, succumbs to the Rage and attacks the village of Trenahess, leaving it in ruins.

Nightal 6 Sammaster is destroyed and the rage comes to an end.

1374 The Year of Lightning Storms

Taraskh 12 In the wake of a failed assault on Evereska, the half-fiend gold elves of House Dlardrageth return to Myth Drannor, accompanied by a legion of fey'ri liberated from the Nameless Dungeon.

Mirtul 6 House Dlardrageth's legions destroy the Morninglord's temple in Myth Drannor, killing most of the clerics, although a few escape through a portal.

Mirtul 10 Scyllua Darkhope learns of the fey'ri presence in Myth Drannor.

Mirtul 13 Lady Sarya Dlardrageth, matron of House Dlardrageth, summons Malkizid, an exiled archdevil, to Myth Drannor.

Mirtul 19 Araevin Teshurr and his adventuring companions uncover the portal network Sarya used to move her army from the ruins of

	Myth Glaurach, her bastion near the High Forest, to Myth Drannor.
Mirtul 22	Scyllua Darkhope begins preparations to march a Zhentarim army south to Yûlash.
Mirtul 24	Lord Seiveril Miritar of Elion, leader of the Crusade from Evermeet that rescued Evereska, convenes a Council of War in the ruins of Myth Glaurach. The commanders of the Crusade agree to travel via the portal network discovered by Araevin to Semberholme in hopes of defeating House Dlardrageth once and for all.
Mirtul 28	By the shore of Lake Sember, Seiveril revives the Dales Compact with Battledale, Deepingdale, Mistledale, and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 1	The Crusade marches north toward Mistledale and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 4	House Dlardrageth forms an alliance with Hillsfar and Sembia. Hillsfar begins mustering an army to send south down the Moonsea Ride to Mistledale and Battledale. Sembia recruits a mercenary army to send north along Rauthauvyr's Road through Featherdale and Tasseldale.
Kythorn 12	Hillsfar allies with Zhentil Keep. The Black Network agrees to invade Daggerdale and Shadowdale.
Kythorn 16	Sembia's mercenaries cross Blackfeather Bridge and occupy Battledale.
Kythorn 21	Hillsfar reneges on its alliance with House Dlardrageth.
Kythorn 24	The Crusade routs Scyllua Darkhope's army, forcing them to retreat to Yûlash.
Kythorn 26	House Dlardrageth attacks the city of Hillsfar and Hillsfar's army based at the Standing Stone. The First Lord's tower is destroyed, but Maalthiir, ruler of Hillsfar, escapes.
Flamerule 3	House Dlardrageth breaks Hillsfar's army at the Standing Stone, forcing it to flee back to Hillsfar. Sembia's army begins to dissolve under repeated assault by the legions of House Dlardrageth.
Flamerule 21	House Dlardrageth destroys the Standing Stone and allies with the House Jaelre drow.
Eleasis 5	Emissaries of the Crusade reach a truce with the Sembians. House Dlardrageth launches a raid against the Crusade encampment at Semberholme, but is repulsed.

Eleasis 6	Zhentil Keep's army crushes the Hillsfar garrison at Yûlash (*Final Gate*).
Eleasis 9	House Jaelre attacks the Sembian and elven delegations in Tasseldale; all three groups suffer casualties. Maalthiir decamps from Hillsfar; destination unknown.
Eleasis 10	The Zhentilar invades Hillsfar's western territories.
Eleasis 11	The Crusade allies with Sembia against House Dlardrageth.
Eleasis 17	Fzoul issues his terms to Hardil Gearas, High Warden of Hillsfar (*Final Gate*).
Eleasis 17	The Crusade battles the legions of House Dlardrageth in the Vale of Lost Voices. The Zhentilar besiege Hillsfar.
Eleasis 18	Malkizid is banished. House Dlardrageth retreats from the Vale of Lost Voices. Hillsfar capitulates to the army of Zhentil Keep.
Eleasis 20	The Crusade surrounds Myth Drannor.
Eleasis 22	The Crusade overruns Myth Drannor and House Dlardrageth falls. A handful of fey'ri escape. Seiveril Miritar is slain.
Eleasis 27	Fzoul Chembryl meets in secret with Jezz the Lame of House Jaelre and representatives of the Auzkovyn Clan. The three groups agree to work in concert to destroy the Fair Folk before they can truly reestablish the City of Song.
Eleasis 29	Fzoul Chembryl orders Scyllua Darkhope to seize control of the Moonsea Ride by establishing a series of fortifications along the road south from Hillsfar.
Eleint 3	Skirmishes between the Zhentarim and Myth Drannor erupt along the Moonsea Ride. Masked drow support the Black Network with targeted assassinations. This marks the beginning of the Cormanthor War, pitting the Army of Myth Drannor against the Army of Darkhope and the Masked Brigades (Vhaeraun-worshiping drow of House Jaelre and the Auzkovyn Clan). In the months that follow, a series of increasingly deadly raids and counter-raids are mounted by each side.
Eleint 12	Storm Silverhand, Dove Falconhand, and the rest of the Knights of Myth Drannor arrive in the City of Song to aid in its defense. Within hours they are engaged in a series of hit-and-run battles with drow skirmishers in the forests to the east.
Uktar 3	A Sharran priestess, Esvele Greycastle, forges an alliance with Fzoul Chembryl, Tyrant of the Moonsea.
Feast of the Moon	Esvele Greycastle forges an alliance between the Lolth-worshiping drow of House Dhuurniv and the Zhentarim.

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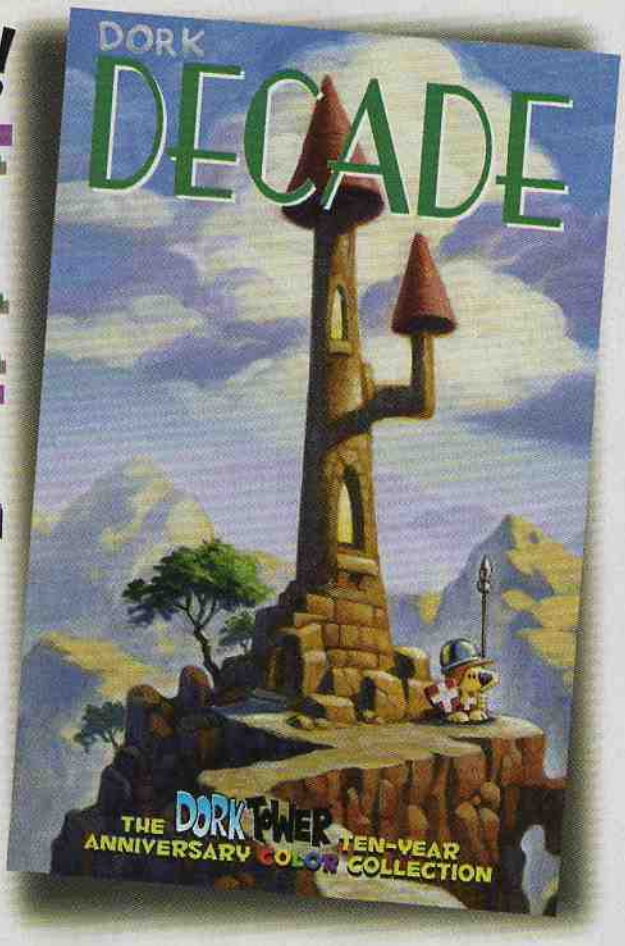
DORK STORM



Nightal 1	Scyllua Darkhope returns to Zhentil Keep to lead an additional division into the field. To her surprise, Fzoul orders her to invade Shadowdale again, but this time with support from the Church of Shar and the drow of House Dhuurniv.
Nightal 15	Sharran assassins infiltrate the village of Shadowdale and attack Elminster's Tower. After a fierce battle, Elminster vanishes and his tower is blasted into ruin and hurled into another plane.
Nightal 16	In the early morning hours, the Zhentarim army led by Scyllua Darkhope overruns Shadowdale with the aid of the Church of Shar and House Dhuurniv. The Army of Myth Drannor is unable to respond as Zhentarim brigades to the east launch simultaneous attacks on several key elven fortifications.
Nightal 18	Lord Mourngrym Amcathra publicly embraces the Army of Darkhope as allies and defenders of Shadowdale.
Nightal 27	Scyllua Darkhope begins preparations to march south with two brigades to attack Mistledale, leaving behind the Brigade of Shadows to occupy Shadowdale.
Nightal 29	The triggering of ancient wards alerts Coronal Isevele Miritar that Ary'velahr'Kerym, the fabled Warblade, has returned to the Realms Above (or the uppermost reaches of the Underdark) in the vicinity of the Twisted Tower.
Nightal 30	Storm Silverhand and Dove Falconhand lead an elite contingent of elves into Shadowdale. The Chosen of Mystra are grievously wounded upon their arrival due to the interaction of their silver fire with the local Weave and forced to teleport away. Their comrades-in-arms are left behind to an uncertain fate.

FACTIONS

Although Myth Drannor has been purged of the Cult of the Dragon, House Dlardrageth, the phaerimm, and Zhentarim-summoned devils, the Elven Woods are still home to many competing factions who battle each other amidst the trees.

Army of Darkhope

The Army of Darkhope, consisting of Zhentilar troops supplemented by mercenary companies who equal them in number is ensconced in Hillsfar, Shadowdale, and newly built fortifications along the Moonsea Ride. High Captain Scyllua Darkhope reports to Fzoul Chembyrl, Tyrant of the Moonsea. He has ordered her to work with the Masked Brigades to dislodge the Army of Myth Drannor from the City of Song before the Fair Folk can reestablish their power in the region.

Army of Myth Drannor

In the wake of the Seiveril's Crusade, the Fair Folk and their allies have reclaimed the City of Beauty. Although at this point the settlement is little more than a fortified encampment amidst the ruins of a once-great city, the new inhabitants have plans to restore Myth Drannor's former glory. The newly ensconced defenders, under the command of Isvele Miritar, have renamed their legions the Army of Myth Drannor. Isvele's forces now control the Heartwood (the region of forest surrounding Myth Drannor) and are actively skirmishing to extend their control north into the Beast Marches, west toward Shadowdale, south toward Mistledale and east to the Moonsea Ride.

Cult of the Dragon

The Followers of the Scaly Way have suffered a series of reverses in the Eastern Heartlands in recent years, from the loss of their base in Myth Drannor to the death of Sammaster. In the wake of the last Rage of Dragons, the Followers of the Scaly Way have retreated to three major strongholds in the Cormanthor region: the environs of Dretchroyaster's Lair, Haptooth Hill, and the ruins of Aencar's Manor. Although the Wearers of the Purple hope to recruit one or more new Sacred Ones (dracoliches) from the ranks of those wyrms awakened by Sammaster's Rage, the bulk of their efforts are directed at undermining the burgeoning influence of the Zhentarim.

Masked Brigades

Two clans of Vhaeraun-worshiping drow dwell beneath the boughs of the great forest of Cormanthor. The reclamation of Myth Drannor has prompted the two groups to unite against their common foe. The alliance is known as the Masked Brigades for the many mask-wearing clerics of Vhaeraun in their ranks, a practice that has since spread to most of the assassins and skirmishers who fight from the shadows. The Masked Brigades are strongest in the Darkwoods surrounding the Elven Court, although they have been driven from the seat of elven rule, but small bands of dagger-wielding drow stalk Cormanthor from the outskirts of Mistledale to Halvan's Wood.

Eric L. Boyd is the collective pen name of Phil Athans, Rich Baker, Thomas M. Costa, Ed Greenwood, Paul S. Kemp, George Krashos, Steven E. Schend, Lisa Smedman, and a host of sages from Candlekeep, each of whom contributed significantly to this article. An effort to amicably resolve whose name should be listed first resulted in a tavern brawl at the Old Skull Inn, and all are now barred from the premises.

EBERRON

DRAGONMARKS

BOROMAR CLAN

by Nicolas Logue • introduction by Keith Baker • illustrated by Jon Hodgson

Anyone who calls this an age of peace has never been to Sharn. War began the day the first settlers returned to the city, and more blood has soaked into the stones of Dura than the soil of the Crying Fields. These struggles are fought with gold and steel. The commonfolk never see the borders change, and they might not even know when a king falls in battle. If you are going to the depths of Sharn, you would be wise to learn about the generals and soldiers fighting this shadow war. I will begin your lessons with the oldest of the armies... the Boromar Clan.

—Tasker, Excoriate of House Sivis

In Sharn, one name is synonymous with crime. The Boromar Clan's sinister influence pervades every level of the City of Towers. Its members bribe Watch captains in Dura, collect protection fees from merchant consortiums throughout the Central Plateau, and blackmail powerful families of Upper Menthis, all the while clinking glasses and sipping fine wine among Skyway's elite. The halflings of the Boromar Clan belong to the Sixty, a prestigious group of powerful families of Sharn, even as they bleed the city for all its worth.

WHO IS WHOM

Saiden Boromar (NE male halfling rogue 8) and his wife Mala Boromar d'Jorasco (N female halfling expert 4) currently manage the clan. Saiden is a halfling of many talents who has deftly maintained the clan's ties to its Talenta roots even while expanding the organization's influence to include four of the seventeen seats on the city council and sticking his hands into the deep pockets of the mysterious Aurum. Dressed in Sharn's latest fashions, he navigates the treacherous waters of the city's cutthroat politics with ease. Swathed in the gray-black garb of a back alley killer, he is as silent as a shadow, and his skill with a knife is as lethal as it is legendary. His wife, Mala, is an unmarked heir of House Jorasco. Mala's connections with the dragonmarked house provide yet another strong resource upon which the vicious cabal of criminal halflings relies.

Saiden and Mala's daughter, Ilyra (NE female halfling rogue 3/expert 3), sits on the City Council of Sharn as Lower Dura's chosen representative. Her vote is backed by Caskar Halavik (N male halfling barbarian 2/expert 4), the famed clawfoot racer-cum-Middle Menthis councilor; Thurik Davandi (LN male gnome expert 4/magewright 4), cunning gnome merchant-magewright of Upper Menthis; and Bestan ir'Tonn (LE male halfling aristocrat 3/telepath 9), noted barrister (and agent of the Dreaming Dark) of Upper Tavick's Landing.

Behind the clan's public face reside Castar (NE male gnome diviner 3/expert 3), intelligence officer for the family, and Halak Boromar (NE male halfling barbarian 2/rogue 3), Saiden's illiterate cousin from Talenta whose powers of persuasion are invested in his razor-sharp tangat (a scimitar blade mounted to a short haft).

MODUS OPERANDI

Most criminal cabals resort to thuggery to earn their coin. The Boromar Clan is more enlightened. Violence is bad for business. The halflings made their fortune with the promise of stability. They established Sharn's most powerful and long-standing criminal empire through skillful maneuvering of assets and carefully

executed planning. Protection rackets and smuggling contraband traditionally make the most money for the Boromar Clan—as the family's old timers like to say, "Common criminals rob and kill, we provide services to the community, and all we ask is a little gold and respect in return."

Extortion earns a good income, and while some merchants are none too eager to be fleeced of their hard earned coin, others happily hand the halflings a few silver to keep their storefronts safe and their goods secure. The Boromars declare those who pay as untouchable, and they promise dire consequences to any other criminal harassing these protected businesses. Up-and-coming gangs of ne'er-do-wells with no sense of the Boromar's rich history in crime often mistake the halflings as "soft criminals" or "stumpy little dandies." The truth is, the halflings avoid violence as a rule because it disrupts cash-flow, but when someone threatens their interests the Boromars respond with ruthless measures.

While other criminal organizations favor public displays of brutal violence, the Boromars long ago learned the power of the unpredictable and utterly inexplicable disappearance of a loved one. When someone crosses the halflings, that person's wife, son, father, or other very close relative simply vanishes. A vanished person is never found. The foolish individual who believed he could cross the Boromars and get away with it is left to wonder forever what horrible fate his loved one met.

The Boromars own and operate dozens of warehouses in Precarious and Cogsgate, where contraband—such as illegally obtained dragonshards, casks of Sarlonan dreamlily, dangerous restricted magical weapons, deadly poisons, blank notarized Sivis documents, and all manner of stolen goods—cool off before the halflings fence them. Much illegal contraband is smuggled into Terminus via lightning rail coaches or ferried in onboard cargo barges floating down the Dagger to the sky docks of Precarious.

No smugglers operate in the city without the Boromar's say-so. Those who try go missing, their ships scuttled in the Hilt. On occasion, the Boromars use a third party to encourage up-and-coming smuggling organizations to make in-roads into Sharn. They then seize these fledglings' ships, mercilessly dispatch the crews, and fence their cargo for a quick profit. Saiden particularly enjoys this scam, although engaging in this too often makes long-time smuggling partners of the Clan jumpy.

Above all, the Boromars prefer blackmail. "A dead man can't earn" is a favorite saying of the Boromar Clan. Simply killing an enemy, while removing an obstacle, is an expendi-

ture of resources (whether paying corrupt Watch members or hiring House Tarkanan killers). The halflings prefer to turn a thorn in their side into an asset, and blackmail is the key. Instead of murdering an enemy, the clan digs up the dirtiest little secrets they can find and hold these secrets over the head of their erstwhile foe. A spotless reputation and absence of ill-doings is no protection from the industrious scam-artists of the Boromar Clan, who are masters at orchestrating a sinister crime and framing their enemy for it. When faced with the options of a ruined reputation (or languishing in the Citadel jail) or obeying the Boromar Clan, most poor saps willingly concede to serving at the halflings' pleasure. The Boromars use these dupes to expand their influence and pay a steady stream of gold to keep their ill deeds from coming to light.

THE GHOST OF THE CLAN

One of Saiden's best-kept secrets is his personal bodyguard, an old but very lethal clawfoot dinosaur with vicious oversized talons and a bizarre chameleon hide. Ghostclaw (CE male awakened clawfoot scout 5), as Saiden affectionately calls the dinosaur, has been at the halfling's side for more than a decade. Awakened by a Talenta halfling druid, Ghostclaw murdered his benefactor shortly after gaining higher awareness. Eventually, Saiden's uncle, a shifty old country halfling named Barang, captured the dangerous predator after it culled several members of his tribe in Talenta. Barang spared the strange beast's life and convinced it to protect his favorite nephew, Saiden. The young Saiden and Ghostclaw shared a talent for killing and bonded deeply. The dinosaur serves the head of the Boromar Clan loyally to this day. Only the most trusted members of Saiden's inner circle even know of the dinosaur's existence. Ghostclaw's adaptive skin allows it to remain hidden from prying eyes, and unless he is charged with stalking an enemy of the clan, the dinosaur never strays far from his master's side.

BOROMAR CLAN AFFFLIATION

Symbol: A silver dragon perched upon the spire of a great tower, its wings shrouding its form.

Motto: One need not be tall to stand atop the highest tower.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: The Boromar Clan seeks to maintain its traditions and dominion over Sharn's underworld. Daask is shaking a foundation that's taken centuries to build. But Saiden and his most loyal among the inner circle understand that true power persists, and while Daask (a rival criminal organization of monstrous immigrants) makes waves now, the halflings have their eyes on the future. Saiden's forces can't match Daask one on one, but he is carefully maneuvering pieces in place as he moves toward the absolute elimination of the monsters. In the meantime, he continues to pursue more ways of legitimizing his clan's influence and increasing his political moxy. Respect is everything to the Boromars. They will not rest until the entire population of the city acknowledges their ultimate supremacy over Sharn's underworld.

Enemies and Allies: The Boromars survived hundreds of years on top not by eliminating the competition but rather by assimilating or subordinating them. The halflings are by far the wealthiest of Sharn's crime rings, and they enjoy their success by focusing their efforts on a narrow spread of illicit activities. Drug trade, burglary, smuggling, and extortion are the only areas of crime the halflings care about. To date, the Tyrants' endeavors in prostitution and information gathering has posed no real threat to the Clan, and the Boromar Clan often uses the services of House Tarkanan assassins. At the moment, only Daask poses a serious threat to Boromar power.

House Jorasco offers healing to the clan's halfling members and, perhaps more importantly, sometimes denies its services to the Boromars' enemies.

Members: Most of the 260 core members of the clan are halflings, many being bookkeepers, administrators, or expert thieves. The clan insulates its inner circle (108 halflings, 32 of which are related to Saiden by blood or marriage) from any criminal liability through echelons of command, fake businesses, and coded messages. Accusations leveled at inner circle Boromars never amount to much more than a few lower-level scapegoats paying for the crime. The clan's best enforcers are the Clawfeet, a band of barbarian/rogue halflings under Halak Boromar's command. Beyond its core members, the clan employs hundreds of unaffiliated thieves, money lenders, debt collectors, con artists, and sellswords as well.

Secrets: The Boromar Clan keeps countless secrets, both its own and those it uses as leverage to blackmail its enemies. One well-kept secret is Mala's ever growing desire to make the Boromar Clan completely legitimate. Mala and her daughter both see a golden opportunity to take the clan into such bold new enterprises as political ascendancy or economic domination. They view the family's criminality as a relic of its early rise to power holding them back from greater pursuits (and unimaginable wealth and status). Saiden completely disagrees, seeing the clan's reputation as a fearsome syndicate as yet another "face" of the family, used to potent effect against those who would stand in its way. Behind closed doors, the Boromars' rows on this issue are more than a little heated.

Type: Thieves Guild.

Scale: 10 (regional/major city).

Affiliation Score Criteria: Boromar Clan members constantly interview new candidates. Halflings join the ranks with ease, but others may enlist after proving their loyalty and worth with a short probationary period of membership.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character Level	+1/2 PCs level
5 or more ranks in at least two Charisma-based skills	+1
Rogue	+2
Halfling	+2
Every 10,000 gp in criminal revenue brought to the clan	+1
Gain blackmail leverage on an enemy of the clan	+1
Make useful smuggling connections in Xen'drik or another far off land	+1
Pull off an impressive heist	+1
Slay member of Daask	+1/8 creature's CR
Clear a clan members name in a major criminal case	+2
Gain impressive social status in Sharn	+1
Embarrass the clan with failure	–2
Responsible for the death of a fellow clan member	–1
Aid Daask	–4
Resort to violence when an alternative would be more lucrative	–1
Serve in military of any kind	–1
Kill a noted citizen of Sharn without the clan's permission	–4

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Novice member with no benefits
4–10	**Sneaktheif:** +2 competence bonus on Hide and Sleight of Hand checks. Must donate at least 50 gp a month of earnings to clan interests. Gain 5% discount on any goods or services purchased through a Boromar-protected vendor. If halfling, receive a 10% discount on House Jorasco services.
11–17	**Streetkeeper:** +4 insight bonus on Gather Information checks made in Sharn. +4 insight bonus on Diplomacy checks made to deal with the Watch or anyone else on the Boromar Clan's payroll. Must manage a gang of 2d4 Boromar pickpockets (*Sharn: City of Towers*, 151) and pay the clan 500 gp a month from their earnings (or pay out of your own pocket if they fail to acquire enough gold).
18–24	**Core Member:** +2 insight bonus on Bluff and Intimidate checks, once per week you may have a minor criminal charge levied at yourself or anyone else dropped. Whenever Inner Circle member of the clan is implicated in a major crime there is a 5% chance of being framed to take the rap.
25–29	**Knife of the Clan:** Once per month, you can arrange to pin a crime on an innocent person. Twice per month, you must personally take responsibility for blackmailing, intimidating, or slaying a powerful enemy of the clan.
30 or higher	**Inner Circle:** +2 insight bonus on Disguise and Sense Motive checks. Once per month you may order the disappearance of any NPC with HD up to 1/4 your own. May vouch for a new member every month to raise their affiliation score by +2 (once only for any one member). Must never be implicated in a major crime (if so suffer an immediate –10 to affiliation score). Every month must find a way to significantly increase the influence of the clan.

Executive Powers: Pariah, Shadow War, and Terrorize.

 by Andy Collins • illustrated by Andrew Hou

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month, the Sage leaps into the fray, answering a variety of questions related to *Tome of Battle: The Book of Nine Swords*. Send your D&D questions to **sageadvice@paizo.com**.

Does a multiclassed martial adept have separate lists of known and readied maneuvers (one for each class), or are they all combined?

Each martial adept class keeps a separate list of known and readied maneuvers. Knowing a maneuver from your swordsage levels doesn't mean you can ready it as one of your crusader maneuvers, even if the discipline is one allowed by that class.

How does a character with levels in more than one martial adept class calculate his initiator level?

Calculate your initiator level for each of your martial adept classes separately. Your initiator level for each martial adept class equals your level in that class plus one-half your levels in all other classes (even if those other classes are martial adept classes).

For example, an 8th-level swordsage/4th-level warblade would have an initiator level of 10th for all swordsage maneuvers (including determining the maximum level of maneuver the character could learn from swordsage levels), and an initiator level of 8th for all warblade maneuvers (and for learning new warblade maneuvers).

Some prestige classes (such as the deepstone sentinel) allow you to add your full class level of that prestige class to your initiator level (rather than one-half the class level). If a deepstone sentinel had more than one initiator level (such as the swordsage/warblade described above), he'd add his deepstone sentinel class level to each.

Can a character save a known maneuver or known stance slot until a later level in order to learn a higher-level maneuver or stance?

No. You must learn a new maneuver or stance at the level at which it is granted. For example, a 1st-level warblade must learn a stance at 1st level—he can't delay learning this stance until higher-level stances become available.

At 4th level, and at every even-numbered level thereafter, you can swap a known maneuver for a new one, and this new maneuver can be of any level that you qualify to learn. You can't, however, replace a known stance in this manner.

At certain levels, martial adepts may replace known maneuvers with new ones. If as a result of this replacement, my martial adept no longer meets the prerequisite of a previously selected maneuver, what happens?

If at any time you no longer meet the prerequisite for a maneuver or stance, you can't use that maneuver or stance until you once again meet the prerequisite.

Does the swordsage's Armor Class bonus stack with that granted by the monk class?

No. Both class features share the same name and have the same effect, so they do not stack.

Does the swordsage's discipline focus count as Weapon Focus for meeting the prerequisites of a feat or requirements of a prestige class?

Yes; it counts as Weapon Focus for all purposes, including meeting prerequisites or requirements.

Do the swordsage's insightful strike and defensive stance benefits (from the discipline focus class feature) apply to maneuvers and stances that were gained from sources other than the swordsage class?

Yes.

For example, a 5th-level swordsage/1st-level fighter/3rd-level bloodclaw master with discipline focus (Tiger Claw) may add her Wisdom modifier as a bonus on damage rolls with any Tiger Claw strike, whether that strike was learned from swordsage levels, from the Martial Study feat she took with her fighter level, or from her bloodclaw master prestige class levels.

Can a martial adept with a base attack bonus of +6 or higher use a full attack action to make a strike and then make another melee attack with a –5 penalty? What if I have a natural secondary attack—can I make that attack in addition to a strike?

No. A strike that requires a standard action can't be combined with additional attacks as part of a full attack, regardless of your character's base attack bonus.

Can I learn the same maneuver more than once?

No. Each time you learn a maneuver, you must learn one that you don't already know.

When a class level or other source grants a new maneuver learned, can I use that to learn a new stance instead?

No. You can only learn stances when specifically allowed to gain a new stance.

Can I ready the same maneuver multiple times just like a wizard preparing spells, or must each one that you ready be different?

Each maneuver that you ready must be different; you can't ready the same maneuver in more than one "slot" simultaneously.

Can I initiate more than one maneuver in the same turn or initiate a maneuver and also enter a stance in the same turn?

Yes, as long as you have sufficient actions to do so.

Conceivably, you could initiate up to three maneuvers in the same turn—one that required a swift action, one that required a move action, and a third that required a standard (or move) action. Then, at any time before your next turn you could initiate a counter or other immediate-action maneuver (although that would expend your next turn's swift action, of course).

Can maneuvers and stances be used outside of combat? And if so, how frequently can they be used?

Yes... and it depends.

If you initiate a maneuver outside of a normal encounter, you can use it again once you've performed the requisite action to ready it once again. For example, a warblade could potentially repeat the same strike every other round (spending the off rounds readying it with a swift action plus a standard action).

In the case of known maneuvers that don't allow a means of readying it for a second use during the encounter (such as via the Martial Study feat), the rules don't describe how to determine the minimum frequency of out-of-combat reuse. Ultimately, then, this falls into the DM's purview. The Sage recommends that the DM limit the use of such maneuvers to once per meaningful scene or activity (such as breaking down a door) so that the character doesn't overshadow the more talented martial adepts. When in doubt, a limit of once per minute or so is probably fair.

In the description for strike maneuvers it states that special attacks such as bull rush or sunder cannot be used in combination with a strike. What qualifies as a special attack? Would this include feats such as Power Attack and Cleave or class abilities such as sneak attack?

You can't use bull rush, charge, disarm, grapple, sunder, or trip in combination with a strike unless the strike specifically allows such an attempt. A strike is a special kind of attack all on its own, and can't be replaced by any of these special attacks.

Special abilities that just affect your attack roll or damage roll (such as Power Attack or sneak attack) function normally when you use a strike.

The text specifically states that you "cannot benefit from spells or effects that grant you extra attacks." The Sage is inclined to include Cleave in that category—you don't get to repeat the strike just because it dropped a foe.

Is a maneuver's damage multiplied on a critical hit?

This depends on whether the maneuver is adding bonus dice of damage to your attack or if it's simply dealing damage itself.

Extra damage dice (such as those from sneak attack or a flaming weapon) are never multiplied on a critical hit, so any extra damage dice granted by a maneuver wouldn't be multiplied on a crit. For example, a critical hit with swooping dragon strike wouldn't multiply the extra 10d6 damage added by the strike (but the normal damage dealt by the attack would be multiplied normally).

If a maneuver simply deals an amount of damage, however, rather than adding extra damage dice to the normal attack's damage, that damage would be multiplied on a successful critical hit. For example, the fire riposte maneuver deals 4d6 points of fire damage, or double that amount with a successful critical hit (assuming the weapon deals double damage on a crit).

Do I have to activate a boost before I resolve the attack it's affecting, or can I wait until I see if the attack hits?

Generally, you can't spend swift actions between making an attack roll and determining its success unless the ability indicates otherwise. If you wanted to gain the benefit of burning blade, for example, you'd have to activate it before making the attack roll.

Exceptions to this rule can exist, and in some cases the DM must apply his best judgment as to the appropriate timing of the effect.

Do you have to use a discipline's preferred weapon in order to use its maneuvers?

Not unless the maneuver states so specifically. The preferred weapons are primarily flavorful, although some discipline-related effects, such as some of the feats in Chapter 2: Skills and Feats specifically require (or reward) the use of a preferred weapon.

How are maneuvers affected when used by a creature with more than two arms? For example, I have a thri-kreen warblade, and I'm not sure if some of the strikes would be performed differently or not. Would he get an extra attack with the strikes, or something along those lines?

Maneuvers work the same way regardless of your number of arms. Some maneuvers are more effective for characters wielding extra weapons (such as time stands still, which grants you an extra full attack action), but the maneuver itself doesn't work any differently.

When I initiate the time stands still maneuver, can I use either of the full attack actions it grants to initiate other maneuvers?

No, because the maneuver grants you a specific action (a full attack action), not a full-round action. You can't initiate a maneuver as part of a full attack action, since all maneuvers by default require a swift, standard, move, immediate, or full-round action to initiate.

If a maneuver has no prerequisites, can I learn it at 1st level?

No.

In addition to any prerequisites listed for a maneuver or stance, you must always meet the minimum initiator level required for a maneuver or stance of that level (see Table 3–1: Highest-Level Maneuvers Known). For instance, you'd need to be 17th level before you could learn mountain tombstone strike, since that's a 9th-level strike.

This applies both to martial adepts learning maneuvers or stances from their classes or to characters selecting a maneuver or stance via any other means (such as the Martial Study feat).

The Sage graciously thanks the Ask Wizards column at wizards.com/dnd and the Wizards of the Coast Game Support team for questions provided for this column.

Dragon

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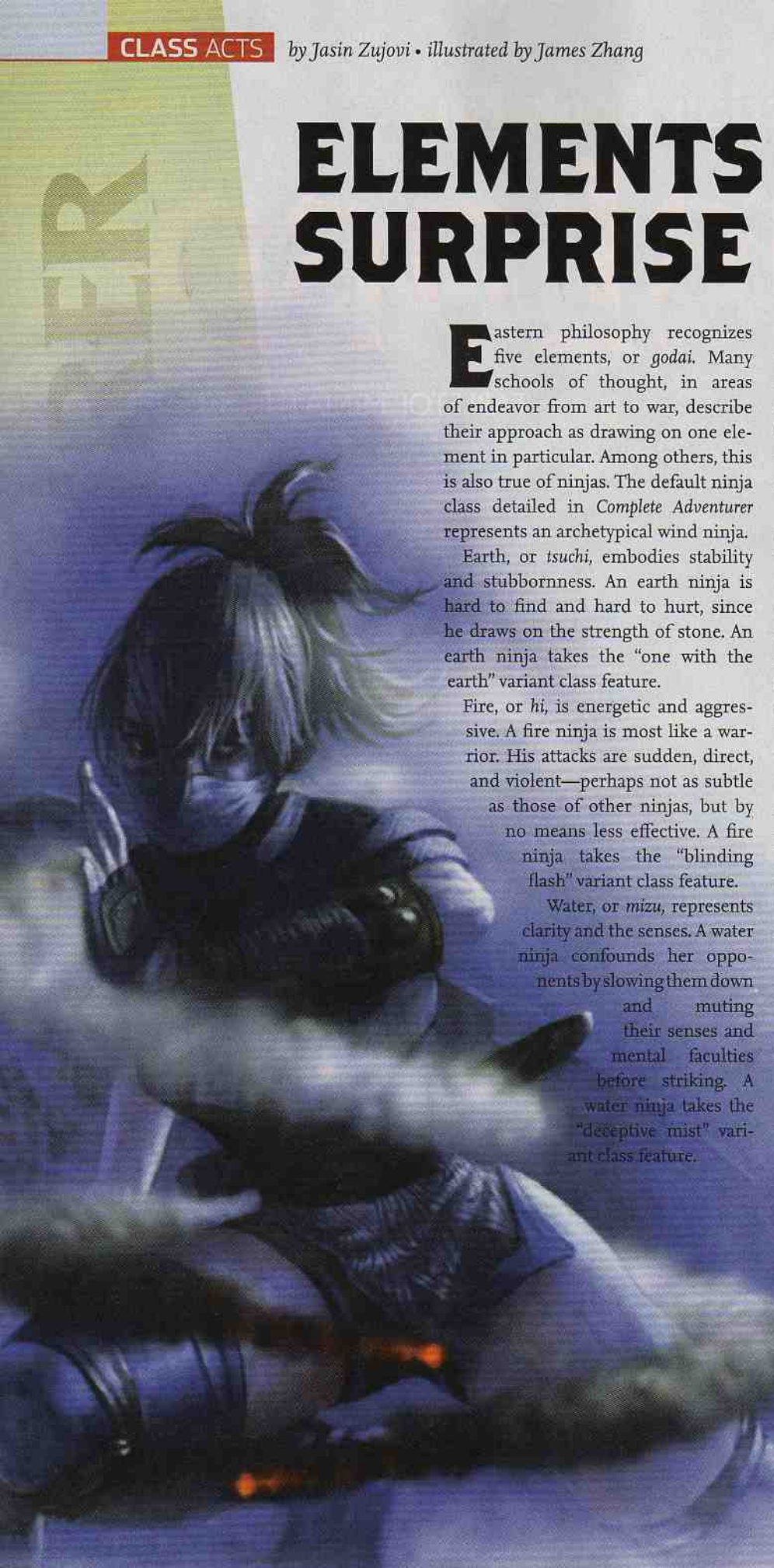
 by Jasin Zujovi • illustrated by James Zhang

ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE



Eastern philosophy recognizes five elements, or *godai*. Many schools of thought, in areas of endeavor from art to war, describe their approach as drawing on one element in particular. Among others, this is also true of ninjas. The default ninja class detailed in *Complete Adventurer* represents an archetypical wind ninja.

Earth, or *tsuchi*, embodies stability and stubbornness. An earth ninja is hard to find and hard to hurt, since he draws on the strength of stone. An earth ninja takes the "one with the earth" variant class feature.

Fire, or *hi*, is energetic and aggressive. A fire ninja is most like a warrior. His attacks are sudden, direct, and violent—perhaps not as subtle as those of other ninjas, but by no means less effective. A fire ninja takes the "blinding flash" variant class feature.

Water, or *mizu*, represents clarity and the senses. A water ninja confounds her opponents by slowing them down and muting their senses and mental faculties before striking. A water ninja takes the "deceptive mist" variant class feature.

Elusiveness and subtlety define wind, or *kaze*. A wind ninja uses her ability to walk unseen and unheard to strike at her enemies by surprise and is the most common type of ninja—since wind most closely represents traits associated with ninjas.

At high levels, all ninjas gain some understanding of the fifth element, Void, or *ku*. This allows them to perceive ghosts and invisible creatures and make their own bodies insubstantial for extended periods. Void is both the element of nothingness and—simultaneously—the element of everything. Contradictory and hard to understand, few of Void's secrets draw philosophers, and ninjas master only a small selection of its more practical aspects. Stories persist of ninja clans focusing exclusively on Void, but even ninjas dismiss such tales as mere rumor.

The following variant class features for ninjas represent training in traditions focusing on elements other than wind. Variant class features first appeared in *Player's Handbook II*.

BLINDING FLASH

At first glance, a flashy ninja might seem like a contradiction in terms, but when you remember that light can blind just as easily as illuminate, you understand the philosophy of the fire ninja. Once a fire ninja strikes she becomes instantly noticeable, but by blinding her foes she nonetheless espouses the typical ninja philosophies of ambush and surprise.

Level: 2nd.

Replaces: If the ninja selects the blinding flash class feature, she does not gain ghost step at 2nd level, the ghost strike class feature at 8th level, or the improvement to ghost step at 10th level.

Benefit: You can spend one daily use of your *ki* power to momentarily burst into flames. Anyone within 20 feet must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 your ninja level + your Wisdom modifier) or be blinded for 1 round. Creatures that succeed on the save are merely dazzled for 1 round. Using this ability is a swift action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Like ghost step, this ability allows you to make sudden strike attacks on blinded targets.

At 8th level, when you make a sudden strike attack against a blind foe, your victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your ninja level + your Wisdom modifier) or be blinded for an additional round. You cannot increase the duration of blindness past 1 additional round, regardless of the number of sudden strike attacks you make.

At 10th level, your hands and feet remain wreathed in flames for 1 round after using blinding flash. These flames do not damage anything you hold or wear. While the flames persist, unarmed strikes and melee weapon attacks you make are treated as having the flaming burst special ability. In addition, anyone striking you with a melee weapon, unarmed strike, or natural weapon takes 1d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save for half; DC 10 + 1/2 your ninja level + your Wisdom modifier). Opponents making ranged attacks or attacks using reach weapons are unaffected by this ability.

DECEPTIVE MIST

An attack by a water ninja lacks the suddenness of a wind ninja's strike. Instead of appearing from out of nowhere, a quickly rising mist usually precedes a water ninja. Most opponents cannot react before the mists thicken to create confusion and an opportunity for the water ninja to strike from an unexpected direction.

Level: 2nd.

Replaces: If the ninja selects the deceptive mist class feature, she does not gain ghost step at 2nd level, the ghost strike class feature at 8th level, or the improvement to ghost step at 10th level.

Benefit: You can spend one daily use of your *ki* power to create a thick bank of fog, similar to that created by the *obscuring mist* spell, which spreads in a cylinder 20 feet high with a 20-foot radius, centered on you. It lasts for 1 round and is stationary. If you move outside the area of the deceptive mist it instantly disperses. Your vision is not impeded by your own deceptive mist, and it does not provide creatures with concealment against you. For all creatures except you, the mist obscures all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target).

At 8th level, when you create a deceptive mist you may lace it with any contact or inhaled poison for which you have enough doses. The deceptive mist retains its previous qualities, but it also affects every creature within it with the poison you lace into it. Because the mist disperses into such a large volume, creatures gain a +2 bonus on saving throws made to resist the mist's poison. You are subject to contact poisons within your own deceptive mist but not to inhaled poisons. Lacing a deceptive mist with poison requires two doses of a contact poison or one dose of an inhaled poison. You cannot lace multiple types of poison into your deceptive mist.

At 10th level, when you create a deceptive mist you may imbue it with an effect similar to the *solid fog* spell. This fog is so thick that any creature other than you moving through it progresses at a speed of 5 feet, regardless of its normal speed, and it takes a –2 penalty on all melee attack and melee damage rolls. The vapors prevent effective ranged weapon attacks (except for magic rays and the like). A creature or object that falls into your solid deceptive mist is slowed, so that each 10 feet of vapor it passes through reduces falling damage by 1d6. A creature can't take a 5-foot step while in your solid deceptive mist.

ONE WITH THE EARTH

An earth ninja emphasizes defense. She cannot misdirect her foes in combat as easily as a wind ninja, but the ability to call on the earth itself for hiding and protection can make her much more difficult to attack and damage.

Level: 2nd.

Replaces: If the ninja selects the one with the earth class feature, she does not gain ghost step at 2nd level, the ghost strike class feature at 8th level, or the improvement to ghost step at 10th level.

Benefit: You can spend one daily use of your *ki* power to *meld into stone*, as the spell of the same name, for up to 1 minute. You may maintain your melding into stone by spending a daily use of your *ki* power per minute. Activating this ability is a swift action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

At 8th level, you gain a burrow speed equal to your land speed for 1 round. You can tunnel through earth, sand, or even solid stone (but not metal). Any tunnel you create closes behind you, preventing another creature from following you. If you are in contact with the face of the material you are burrowing through, you can see and hear out as if it wasn't there. You may maintain your burrow speed by spending a daily use of your *ki* power per round. If you run out of uses of *ki* power or can no longer spend them (such as if you become unconscious) while not in contact with the face, you are immediately shunted out into the closest available space, taking 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet moved in the process. Activating this ability is a swift action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

At 10th level, when you emerge after burrowing, a layer of earth or stone clings to your body for 1d4 rounds, granting you damage reduction 10/adamantine during that time.

by Eric Jansing • illustrated by James Zhang

POWER WORD, SPELL

Still Spell allows any spell to be cast without a somatic component, but the spells on the following list don't require a feat to cast motionlessly. Spells with an asterisk (*) are found in the *Spell Compendium*.

0-LEVEL BARD SPELL

Flare: Dazzles one creature (–1 on attack rolls).

1ST-LEVEL BARD SPELLS

Critical Strike*: +1d6 dmg, doubled threat range, +4 to confirm threats.
Expeditious Retreat, Swift*: Your speed increases by 30 ft. for 1 rnd.
Feather Fall: Objects or creatures fall slowly.
Focusing Chant*: Gain +1 on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks.
Invisibility, Swift*: You are invisible for 1 rnd or until you attack.
Undersong*: Make Perform checks instead of Concentration checks.

2ND-LEVEL BARD SPELLS

Bladeweave*: Your melee attack dazes your opponent.
Blindness/Deafness: Makes subject blind or deaf.
Blur: Attacks miss subject 20% of the time.
Delusions of Grandeur*: Subject thinks it is better than it is.
Grace*: Light grants +2 Dex, +10-foot speed, melee attacks are good; –20 on Hide .
Sonic Weapon*: Weapon touched deals +1d6 sonic dmg with each hit.

3RD-LEVEL BARD SPELLS

Geas, Lesser: Commands subject of 7 HD or less.
Suppress Breath Weapon*: Subject can't use breath weapon.

4TH-LEVEL BARD SPELLS

Dimension Door: Teleports you short distance.
Ruin Delver's Fortune*: Cast on another's turn; choose benefit.
Shout: Deafens all within cone and deals 5d6 sonic dmg.

5TH-LEVEL BARD SPELL

Wail of Doom*: 1d4 dmg/lvl; 30-ft. cone; panicked or shaken.

6TH-LEVEL BARD SPELLS

Charm Monster, Mass: As *charm monster*, all within 30 ft.
Geas: As *lesser geas*, plus it affects any creature.
Otto's Irresistible Dance: Forces subject to dance.

0-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELL

Evoc **Flare:** Dazzles one creature (–1 on attack rolls).

1ST-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Abjur **Ectoplasmic Armor*:** AC vs. incorporeal touch.
Conj **Benign Transposition*:** Willing subjects switch.
Blades of Fire*: Your melee weapons deal +1d8 fire dmg for 1 rnd.
Deep Breath*: Your lungs are filled with air.

Div **Critical Strike*:** +1d6 dmg, doubled threat range, +4 to confirm threats.
Golem Strike*: Sneak attack constructs for 1 rnd.
Guided Shot*: Ignore distance, cover, concealment penalties with your ranged attacks for 1 rnd.
Insightful Feint*: +10 on next Bluff check to feint.
Trans **Expeditious Retreat, Swift*:** Your speed increases by 30 ft. for 1 rnd.
Feather Fall: Objects or creatures fall slowly.
Slide*: Move subject 5 feet.

2ND-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Abjur **Scintillating Scales*:** Your natural armor bonus turns into a deflection bonus.
Conj **Baleful Transposition*:** Two subjects switch places.
Illus **Bladeweave*:** Your melee attack dazes opponent.
Blur: Attacks miss subject 20% of the time.
Delusions of Grandeur*: Subject thinks it is better than it is.
Trans **Blindness/Deafness:** Makes subject blind or deaf.
Extend Tentacles*: +5 ft. reach of tentacle attack.
Fearsome Grapple*: Tentacles help you grapple.
Knock: Opens locked or magically sealed door.
Razorfangs*: Your bite or claw attack threatens a critical hit on a 19 or 20.
Slide, Greater*: Move subject 20 feet.
Sonic Weapon*: Weapon touched deals +1d6 sonic dmg with each hit.
Wings of Air*: Subject's flight maneuverability improves by one step.

3RD-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Abjur **Avoid Planar Effects*:** Protection against overtly damaging planar traits.
Ench **Suppress Breath Weapon*:** Can't use breath weapon.

4TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Conj **Dimension Door:** Teleports you short distance.
Translocation Trick*: You and subject switch places and appear as each other.
Ench **Geas, Lesser:** Commands subject of 7 HD or less.
Evoc **Shout:** Deafens all in cone; deals 5d6 sonic dmg.
Trans **Raise from the Deep*:** Creature or sunken ship made buoyant.
Ruin Delver's Fortune*: Cast on another's turn; choose benefit.
Spell Enhancer*: Cast another spell in the same rnd at +2 caster lvl.

5TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Conj **Dimension Door, Greater*:** Short-range, multiple-use *dimension door.*
Teleport: Instantly transport up to 100 miles/lvl.
Div **Contact Other Plane:** Lets you ask question of extraplanar entity.

6TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Ench **Geas:** As *lesser geas,* plus it affects any creature.
Necro **Aura of Terror*:** You gain an aura of fear, or your frightful presence becomes more effective.

7TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Conj **Phase Door:** Creates invisible passage.
Teleport, Greater: As *teleport;* no range limit; no off-target.
Teleport Object: As *teleport,* but affects touched object.
Ench **Hiss of Sleep*:** Induces comatose slumber in subjects.
Power Word Blind: Blinds creature with 200 hp or less.
Illus **Solipsism*:** Subject believes it alone exists.

8TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Ench **Charm Monster, Mass:** As *charm monster;* all within 30 ft.
Maddening Whispers*: Induce madness in subjects.
Otto's Irresistible Dance: Forces subject to dance.
Power Word Stun: Stuns creature with 150 hp or less.

9TH-LEVEL SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

Abjur **Mordenkainen's Disjunction:** Dispels magic, disenchants magic items.
Prismatic Sphere: As *prismatic wall,* but sphere.
Ench **Power Word Kill:** Kills one creature with 100 hp or less.
Necro **Wail of the Banshee:** Kills one creature/lvl.
Trans **Time Stop:** You act freely for 1d4+1 rnds.
Wail of the Banshee: Kills one creature/lvl.

0-LEVEL WU JEN SPELL

Flare: Dazzles one creature (–1 on attack rolls).

2ND-LEVEL WU JEN SPELLS

Blur: Attacks miss subject 20% of the time.
Knock: Opens locked or magically sealed door.

4TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELL

Shout: Deafens all within cone and deals 5d6 sonic dmg.

5TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELL

Teleport: Instantly transports you as far as 100 miles/lvl.

6TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELL

Geas: As *lesser geas,* plus it affects any creature.

7TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELLS

Power Word Blind: Blinds creature with 200 hp or less.
Teleport, Greater: As *teleport;* no range limit; no off-target.
Teleport Object: As *teleport,* but affects touched object.

8TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELLS

Power Word Stun: Stuns creature with 150 hp or less.

9TH-LEVEL WU JEN SPELLS

Power Word Kill: Kills one creature with 100 hp or less.
Time Stop: You act freely for 1d4+1 rnds.

by David Schwartz • illustrated by James Zhang

DIVINE

AZTEC MYTHOS II

Agriculture is the foundation of civilization. From laborers and craftsmen to nobles and warriors, all depend on the abundance of crops produced on farms, orchards, and *chinampas* (floating gardens). Not surprisingly, then, Tlaloc the rain god is arguably the most widely worshiped deity in the Central American highlands. Without rain, crops wither, and thus it is vital that the correct propitiations to Tlaloc be made year round to guarantee enough rain for a good harvest.

After the second sun had gone, Tlaloc claimed the sky and took his place. After a time, Quetzalcoatl sent a firestorm that burned the earth. The shower of flame burned so hot that even the sun went up in flames. Those people who survived transformed into turkeys, a bird important to the Aztecs. Quetzalcoatl then invited the rain god's wife, Chalchihuitlicue, to become the fourth sun, and she agreed. Her time as the sun was marked by unending rain. The water eventually rose above the mountains and the people changed into fish. It rained so hard the sky fell, and with it the fourth sun.

When Quetzalcoatl discovered Food Mountain—where corn, beans, peppers, and all the other foods had been hidden since the beginning of the world—he asked the other deities what they should do with it. Most believed they should take its contents and give it to the people. Yet not Tlaloc, who stole the food while the other deities debated. The rain god still has the food from Food Mountain, which he gives back only a part of each year—some years more, some years less.

Tlaloc and Chalchihuitlicue dwell in the paradise realm of Tlalocan, where the souls of people who died from drowning, lighting, or in childbirth reside.

CHALCHIHUITLICUE

Lesser God (Neutral Good)

Chalchihuitlicue (She of the Skirt of Jade), the goddess of water, beauty, and youth, is revered by water-bearers, fishermen, and *chinampa* workers who depend on her for their livelihood. She is associated with fertility and childbirth and serves as the patron of artists and craftsmen, young lovers, and women in labor.

Chalchihuitlicue lives in Tlalocan, a beautiful paradise created for her by her husband, Tlaloc. After Quetzalcoatl deposed Tlaloc as the third sun, he chose Chalchihuitlicue to serve as the fourth. The ceaseless rain of her time eventually flooded the whole world.

Usually depicted as a beautiful young woman wearing a skirt of jade scales, Chalchihuitlicue is sometimes represented by a river with a fruit-laden cactus on its banks. Jade and the prickly pear cactus both symbolize the human heart, over which she has metaphorical dominion. Her symbol is that of a jade fish.

Chalchihuitlicue teaches a simple philosophy of respect for life. Love and beauty transcend all boundaries, and her followers are encouraged to look for and nurture goodness wherever they find it.

Portfolio: Water, beauty, youth.

Domains: Good, Healing, Luck, Water.

Favored Weapon: Trident.

Cleric Training: Clerics of She of the Jade Skirt look after wells, lakes, and springs. These clerics make

THE FIRST TWO SUNS

This article, the second in a new series presenting everything your divine character needs to worship historical deities, features the deities who acted as the third and fourth suns in the Aztec creation stories. The first and second suns, Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl, were presented in the first article of the series, in *Dragon* #352. Tezcatlipoca, the dark god of chaos and evil, served as the first sun but wasn't bright enough. Quetzalcoatl, god of order and goodness, knocked Tezcatlipoca from the sky and ascended as the second sun (until Tezcatlipoca later knocked him from the sky).

THE ROLE OF CLERICS

The D&D alignment system cannot do justice to the complex morality of early Central American cultures. While many of the Aztec gods were undeniably evil, they had authority over phenomena vital to all living things. Although the gods asked a terrible price, they also provided all that is good in the world: food and drink, beauty and wonder, family and friendship.

The manner in which the people worshiped the deities varied from city-state to city-state, and indeed from individual to individual. While the Aztecs waged continual wars ostensibly to capture prisoners to feed their hungry deities, other Mesoamerican tribes worshiping the same entities practiced human sacrifice much less often.

If you use the Aztec pantheon in your game, you should allow clerics to be of any alignment, rather than merely within one step of their deities. It is not unusual for a good cleric to worship the gentler aspects of an evil deity—such as Tlaloc as the life giving rain or Tezcatlipoca as defender of the downtrodden—and eschew the more violent aspects of the god's worship. Conversely, among an evil culture, an otherwise good deity might be placated with ghastly rituals.

As a further optional rule, an Aztec cleric can cast spells with any alignment descriptor. Evil is still evil, however, so a good cleric who repeatedly casts evil spells or who engages in evil rituals (especially human sacrifice) becomes evil herself.

A cleric can still lose his spells and class features if he grossly violates the tenets of his deity. Although less concerned with ethics and morals, the deities still ban actions that harm or oppose their portfolio—even an evil cleric of Tlaloc would never poison food or drink granted by the god.

sure fresh water remains available to all who need it. They protect these sources of water from overuse and contamination.

Quests: Typical quests include discovering why a well has dried up, uniting star-crossed lovers, and bringing water from Tlalocan to a prince with an incurable disease.

Prayers: Offerings to Chalchihuitlicue are thrown into a body of water. Typical offerings include flowers and small pieces of jade.

Temples: Temples to Chalchihuitlicue are built near sources of fresh water, such as rivers, lakes, and *cenotes* (natural wells), and contain decorative elements made from jade.

Rites: Few regular ceremonies exist for Chalchihuitlicue. Clerics of She of the Jade Skirt serve as celebrants for marriages and births or might be called upon to bless a new *chinampa* or public artwork.

Herald and Allies: Chalchihuitlicue's herald is an 18th-level celestial human cleric. Allies are Medium and Large water elementals and elder tojanidas.

TLALOC

Intermediate God (Lawful Evil)

Tlaloc is the widely worshipped god of rain, for without his life-giving water the city-states could not survive. Tlaloc is also seen as the protector of children and served as the third sun until Quetzalcoatl sent a firestorm to end his reign.

The most inhuman looking of the highland gods, Tlaloc has a reptilian countenance with wide staring eyes and a tusked maw. He is served by his children: minor water spirits collectively known as the Tlaloques.

Tlaloc promotes a philosophy of obedience and discipline. In order to receive the gifts of heaven (such as sunlight and rain) one must obey the will of the deities. He teaches that those who respect their superiors are rewarded. Tlaloc encourages his followers to seize opportunities to advance themselves whenever possible, just as he does himself.

Portfolio: Rain.

Domains: Air, Law, Plant, Water.

Favored Weapon: Sickle.

Cleric Training: Clerics of Tlaloc learn the means to track and predict weather (the will of Tlaloc). When not serving at the temple, clerics might be found providing guidance and blessings to rural communities.

Quests: Typical quests include annexing a *cenote* from a barbarian tribe, protecting a noble's child from evil spirits, and leading an army against an impious king.

Prayers: Clerics of Tlaloc make idols from cornmeal paste, which they then sell to farmers who wish to supplicate the rain god.

Temples: Most cities have a prominent temple to Tlaloc built atop a ziggurat. These temples usually sit alongside temples to the sun god, Tonatiuh (or Huitzilopochtli, in Tenochtitlan). Small shrines to Tlaloc and Chalchihuitlicue are also found near springs and *cenotes*.

Rites: Typical agricultural rituals are performed at various times of the year to appease Tlaloc. During times of draught, however, clerics perform additional rites. These rituals involve shouting and dancing through the night in hopes of waking the rain god from his drought-inducing slumber. If prayers fail, the clerics offer the blood of a youth to Tlaloc. The youth's cries are taken as a positive sign: the more tears, the more rain

Herald and Allies: Tlaloc's herald is a 20th-level lizardfolk druid with wide eyes and large tusks. Allies include formian taskmasters, formian myrmarchs, and Huge elementals (air, fire, or water).

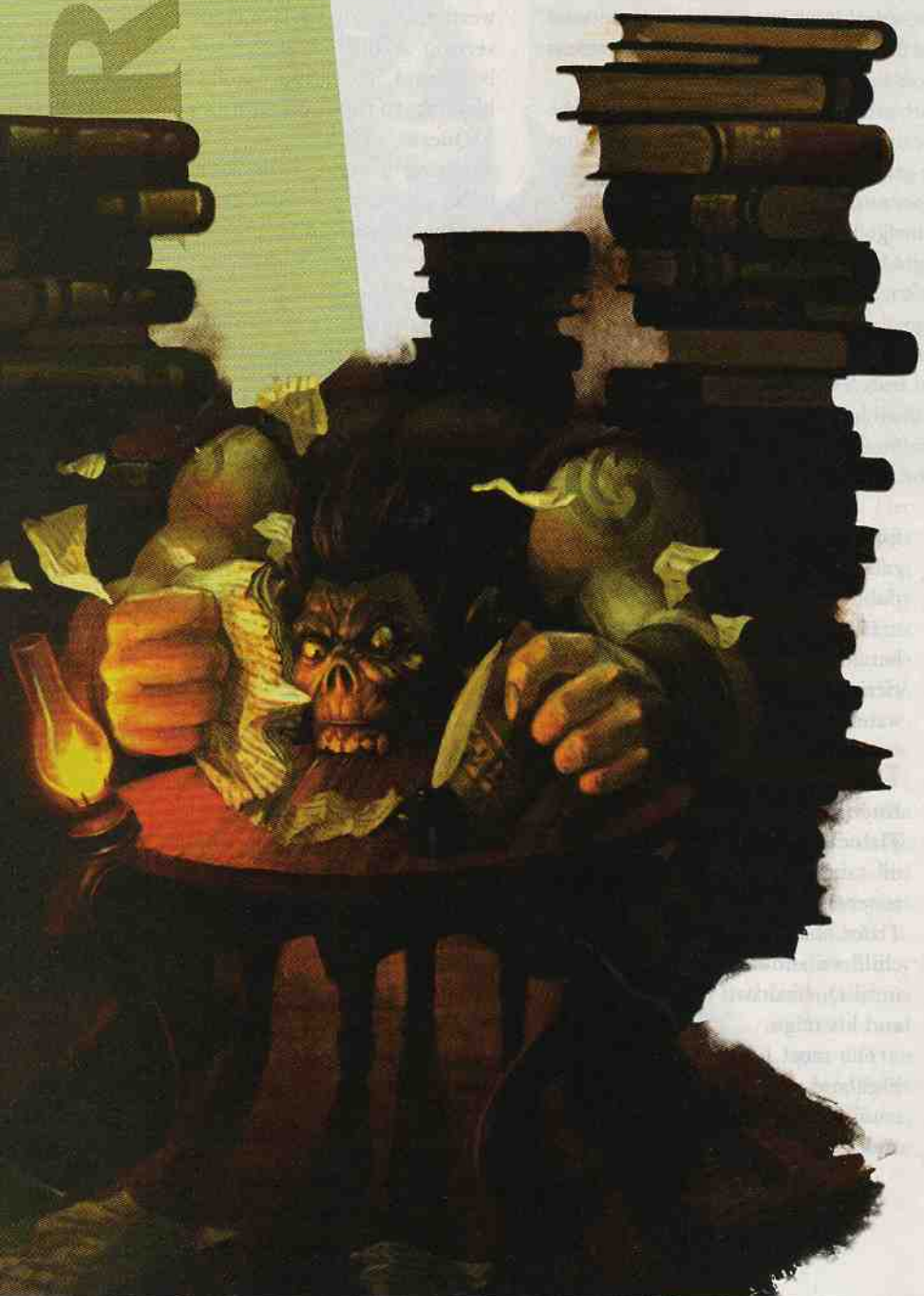
by Amber E. Scott • illustrated by James Zhang

BARBARIAN GUIDE

This guide employs charts, rules clarifications, feat and prestige class suggestions, and rulebook references to enhance and ease the playability of the barbarian.

RAGE

The ability to rage is the barbarian's primary feature. While raging, a barbarian can't undertake any actions that require patience and concentration.



Duration: A barbarian's rage lasts for 3 rounds plus 1 round per point of his rage-enhanced Constitution modifier.

Skills Useable While Raging: All Strength- and Wisdom-based skills. Also Balance, Escape Artist, Intimidate, and Ride.

Feats Useable While Raging: All except for Combat Expertise, item creation feats, and metamagic feats.

Sneak Attack: A barbarian can sneak attack while raging.

Bardic Music: He cannot use bardic music that requires a Perform check while raging. Some bardic music effects do interact with rage. He cannot continue to concentrate on an effect while in a rage.

Unconsciousness: Falling unconscious does not end a rage.

Feats: Destructive Rage, Extend Rage, Extra Rage, Instantaneous Rage, Intimidating Rage (*Complete Warrior*); Mad Foam Rager (*Player's Handbook II*).

Prestige Classes: Bear warrior, eye of Gruumsh, frenzied berserker, rage mage (*Complete Warrior*).

OTHER CLASS FEATURES

Barbarians have several other class features besides rage.

Damage Reduction: A barbarian's damage reduction is an extraordinary ability, so it persists in antimagic areas.

If the barbarian's DR reduces the damage to 0, it also negates most special effects that accompany the attack.

A barbarian who gains damage reduction from another source applies the best damage reduction he possesses in a given situation.

Fast Movement: The barbarian's fast movement grants him an unnamed bonus to speed, which stacks with all other speed bonuses.

Uncanny Dodge: Uncanny dodge protects the barbarian when caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. An enemy can still attempt to feint a

RAGE

Level	Rages/Day	Rage Modifiers	Rage End Penalty
1st	1/day	+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will, –2 AC	Fatigued
4th	2/day	+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will, –2 AC	Fatigued
8th	3/day	+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will, –2 AC	Fatigued
11th	3/day	+6 Str, +6 Con, +3 Will, –2 AC	Fatigued
12th	4/day	+6 Str, +6 Con, +3 Will, –2 AC	Fatigued
14th	4/day	+6 Str, +6 Con, +3 Will*, –2 AC	Fatigued
16th	5/day	+6 Str, +6 Con, +3 Will*, –2 AC	Fatigued
17th	5/day	+6 Str, +6 Con, +3 Will*, –2 AC	—
20th	6/day	+8 Str, +8 Con, +4 Will*, –2 AC	—

*Plus an additional +4 bonus on Will saves to resist enchantment spells.

CLIMB

Modifier or DC	Task
–5	Move half speed with a single Climb check.
+2	Use a climber's kit.
+2	Climb a rope, knotted rope, or rope-and-wall combination when you have 5 or more ranks in Use Rope.
Climb DC	Avoid falling when taking damage while climbing.
Slope DC+10	Catch yourself on a slope while falling.
Wall DC+20	Catch yourself on a wall while falling.

SURVIVAL

DC	Task
10	Move up to half your overland speed while hunting and foraging (no food or water supplies needed). Provide food and water for one other person for every 2 points by which the check result exceeds 10.
15	Gain a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves against severe weather while moving up to half your overland speed, or a +4 bonus while remaining stationary. Grant the same bonus to one other character for every 1 point by which the check result exceeds 15.
15	Keep from getting lost and avoid natural hazards.
15	Predict the weather for 24 hours in advance, plus an additional day for every 5 points by which the check exceeds 15.

DAMAGE REDUCTION

Level	DR
7th	1/—
10th	2/—
13th	3/—
16th	4/—
19th	5/—

RIDE

DC	Task
5	Guide with knees
5	Stay in saddle
10	Fight while mounted
15	Cover
15	Soft fall
15	Leap
15	Spur mount
20	Control mount in battle
20*	Fast mount or dismount

*Armor check penalty applies.

SUNDERING MAGIC ITEMS

According to the official FAQ (**wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/rules**), contrary to text in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, you do not need an item with an equal or greater enhancement bonus to sunder a magic item. A magic item gains +2 hardness and 10 extra hit points per +1 enhancement bonus it possesses. These bonuses apply only to actual enhancement bonuses the item has, not special abilities with effective enhancement bonuses used to calculate price. Magic items that have no enhancement bonuses do not gain extra hardness or hit points.

barbarian. On a successful attempt, the barbarian loses his Dexterity bonus to AC normally. Uncanny Dodge does not apply when a barbarian loses his Dexterity bonus while climbing or making a Balance check.

Feats: Dash, Greater Resiliency (*Complete Warrior*).

Prestige Classes: Darkwood stalker, dervish (*Complete Warrior*); bloodhound, dungeon delver, highland stalker, streetfighter (*Complete Adventurer*).

BRUTE STRENGTH

Barbarians often utilize their raw power.

Sunder: Sundering an item requires an attack roll, so a barbarian may apply Power Attack and similar feats to his sunder attack.

Overrun: A barbarian can only attempt to overrun a single target with the action. If the target of an overrun chooses to avoid the attack, however, the overrun doesn't count against the barbarian's attacks this round. He could then attempt to overrun another target provided he has enough movement and an action left.

Feats: Cleave, Far Shot, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Grapple, Improved Overrun, Improved Precise Shot, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run (*Player's Handbook*); Brutal Throw, Power Throw (*Complete Adventurer*); Clever Wrestling, Close-Quarters Fighting, Earth's Embrace, Flying Kick, Ranged Pin, Ranged Sunder, Roundabout Kick, Sharp-Shooting, Throw Anything (*Complete Warrior*); Brutal Strike, Flay, Penetrating Shot (*Player's Handbook II*).

Prestige Classes: Eye of Gruumsh, frenzied berserker, hulking hurler, reaping mauler (*Complete Warrior*).

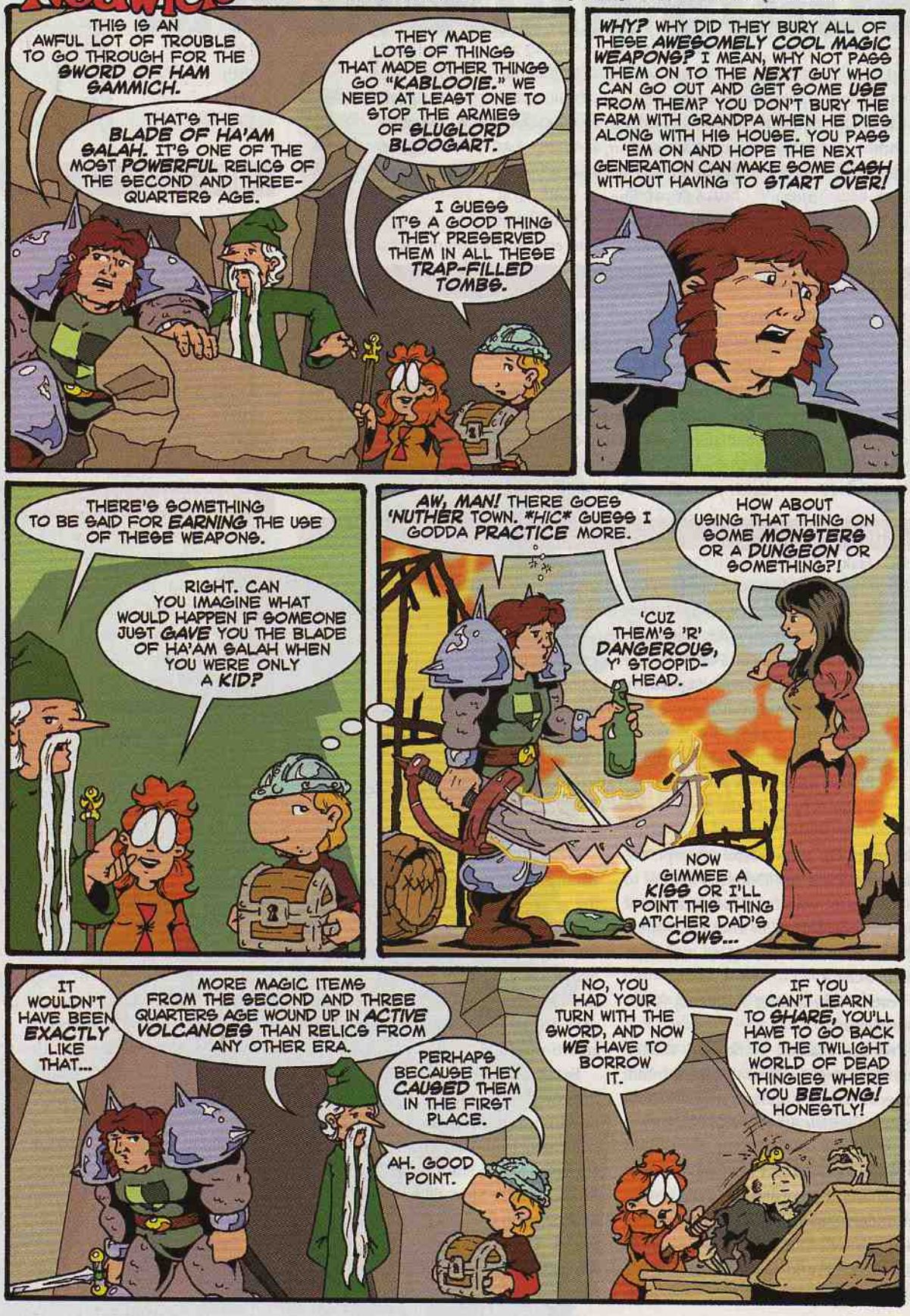
WILDERNESS SKILLS

Barbarians, druids, and rangers are the only core standard classes with Survival on their class skill lists. The Track feat, combined with the barbarian's fast movement and combat focus, makes him an excellent tracker.

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

I either want less corruption, or more chance to participate in it. - Ashleigh Brilliant


THIS IS AN AWFUL LOT OF TROUBLE TO GO THROUGH FOR THE SWORD OF HAM SAMMICH.
THAT'S THE BLADE OF HA'AM SALAH. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL RELICS OF THE SECOND AND THREE-QUARTERS AGE.
THEY MADE LOTS OF THINGS THAT MADE OTHER THINGS GO "KABLOOIE." WE NEED AT LEAST ONE TO STOP THE ARMIES OF SLUGLORD BLOOGART.
I GUESS IT'S A GOOD THING THEY PRESERVED THEM IN ALL THESE TRAP-FILLED TOMBS.
WHY? WHY DID THEY BURY ALL OF THESE AWESOMELY COOL MAGIC WEAPONS? I MEAN, WHY NOT PASS THEM ON TO THE NEXT GUY WHO CAN GO OUT AND GET SOME USE FROM THEM? YOU DON'T BURY THE FARM WITH GRANDPA WHEN HE DIES ALONG WITH HIS HOUSE. YOU PASS 'EM ON AND HOPE THE NEXT GENERATION CAN MAKE SOME CASH WITHOUT HAVING TO START OVER!
THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR EARNING THE USE OF THESE WEAPONS.
RIGHT. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF SOMEONE JUST GAVE YOU THE BLADE OF HA'AM SALAH WHEN YOU WERE ONLY A KID?
AW, MAN! THERE GOES 'NUTHER TOWN. *HIC* GUESS I GODDA PRACTICE MORE.
HOW ABOUT USING THAT THING ON SOME MONSTERS OR A DUNGEON OR SOMETHING?!
'CUZ THEM'S 'R' DANGEROUS, Y' STOOPID-HEAD.
NOW GIMMEE A KISS OR I'LL POINT THIS THING AT'CHER DAD'S COWS...
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN EXACTLY LIKE THAT...
MORE MAGIC ITEMS FROM THE SECOND AND THREE QUARTERS AGE WOUND UP IN ACTIVE VOLCANOES THAN RELICS FROM ANY OTHER ERA.
PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY CAUSED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
AH. GOOD POINT.
NO, YOU HAD YOUR TURN WITH THE SWORD, AND NOW WE HAVE TO BORROW IT.
IF YOU CAN'T LEARN TO SHARE, YOU'LL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE TWILIGHT WORLD OF DEAD THINGIES WHERE YOU BELONG! HONESTLY!

DORK TOWER®
BY JOHN KOVALIC
HOLY CATS! WASN'T LAST NIGHT'S GAMING SESSION HILARIOUS?
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU COME AWAY FROM A GAME WITH A GOOD LAUGH!
"I MEAN, THERE I WAS, BATTLING THE DREAD LORD MOLDYWART IN HIS VERY LIBRARY... WHEN I CAST BIGBY'S GRASPING HAND!"
BUT I PANICKED, AND SOMEHOW CAST "PIGBY'S GRASPING HAM" INSTEAD! HA HA HA!
WHOOP! HAH, HAH. HAH! (GASP) HUNF! HAH!
...INSTANTLY CRUSHING KEN'S TENTH-LEVEL PALADIN UNDER A MASSIVE, PLUMMETING LEG OF PROCESSED PORK! HAH HAH HAH (CHOKE) (SPLUTTER) HE HE HE...
YOU KNOW WHAT'S ALSO FUNNY? THAT SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO HAVE NO SENSE OF HUMOR...
KOVALIC

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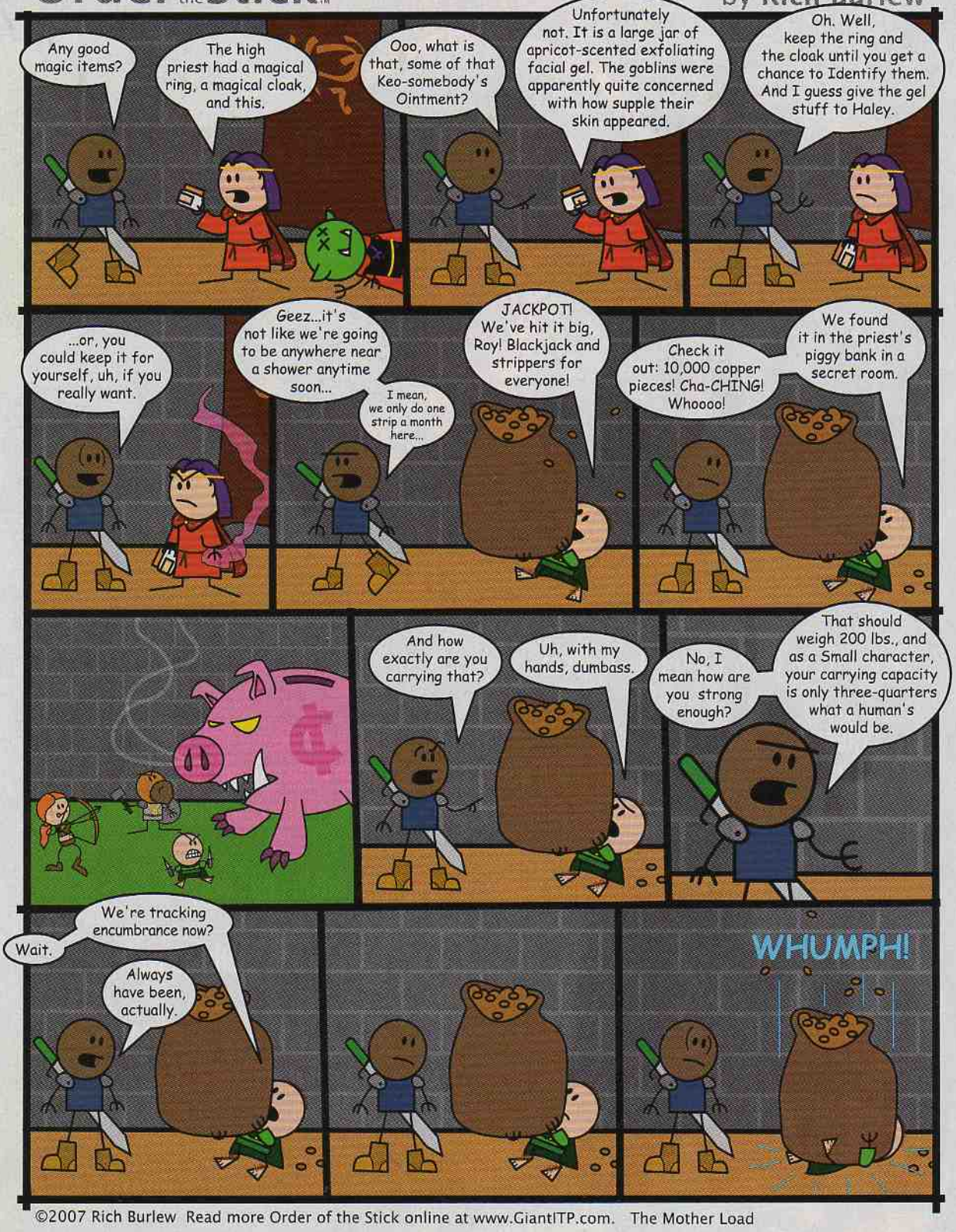
The Order of the Stick™

by Rich Burlew


Any good magic items?
The high priest had a magical ring, a magical cloak, and this.
Ooo, what is that, some of that Keo-somebody's Ointment?
Unfortunately not. It is a large jar of apricot-scented exfoliating facial gel. The goblins were apparently quite concerned with how supple their skin appeared.
Oh. Well, keep the ring and the cloak until you get a chance to Identify them. And I guess give the gel stuff to Haley.
...or, you could keep it for yourself, uh, if you really want.
Geez...it's not like we're going to be anywhere near a shower anytime soon...
I mean, we only do one strip a month here...
JACKPOT! We've hit it big, Roy! Blackjack and strippers for everyone!
Check it out: 10,000 copper pieces! Cha-CHING! Whoooo!
We found it in the priest's piggy bank in a secret room.
And how exactly are you carrying that?
Uh, with my hands, dumbass.
No, I mean how are you strong enough?
That should weigh 200 lbs., and as a Small character, your carrying capacity is only three-quarters what a human's would be.
Wait.
We're tracking encumbrance now?
Always have been, actually.
WHUMPH!

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